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IN THE

INDIAN SEAS,

IN THE

NISUS FRIGATE,

TO THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE, ISLES OF BOURBON, FRANCE, AND
SEYCHELLES; TO MADRAS; AND THE ISLES OF
JAVA, ST. PAUL, AND AMSTERDAM.

DURING THE YEARS 1810 AND 1811.

BY JAMES PRIOR, Esq. R. N.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR SIR RICHARD PHILLIPS AND CO.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE first appearance of a writer before the Public, in some respects resembles the entrance of a stranger into a society in which he is unknown; and where an apology or an explanation of his motives becomes necessary, to account for his intrusion.

The claims of the author to this honour, are presented with considerable diffidence. He had been for some time in the habit of amusing his friends with epistolary sketches of the different places visited by him, during a period of active service in the Royal Navy; and, being flattered that these communicated information and amusement, was requested to enlarge his usual sphere of remark, to give a wider scope to observation and inquiry, and to communicate circumstances in detail, which hitherto he had attempted to handle only in the gross.

Thus extended, the task was at first undertaken, it must be confessed, with considerable reluctance; but, for the gratification of a near and respected relative, now no more, was, nevertheless, continued. By degrees this dislike vanished: very soon, in fact, the feeling of labour became changed into something like pleasure, till, at length, he found little other amusement in the monotony of a ship at sea, beside that of committing his remarks to paper. A succession of interesting events, added to the variety of places visited, continually furnished new food for curiosity and observation: the difficulty was to compress, not to extend, the materials;—more than thrice the present space would be occupied by the manuscript, if given at length,—but this being incompatible with the condensed form of this journal, it has been reduced, with due attention to the interest of the whole.

The narratives of men actively engaged in the military service of the country, who have time or inclination to occupy themselves in this way, deserve, in general, considerable attention. Human nature is seen by them under a variety of new aspects and circumstances, quite unknown to travellers by profession, or to those who chance to make observations in times of security and peace.

A naval officer, perhaps, more than most others, is frequently carried by the calls of duty among scenes and places imperfectly known; and, where he faithfully records passing events, possesses this great advantage over most other travellers, that he is never alone. To his own, may be added the observations

of his companions. Should his eye, therefore, be jaundiced, in viewing particular places, or people, he has an immediate corrective in the general feeling of those around him; and where the majority agree in points that admit of diversity of opinion, the impression is likely to be just.

Few, in fact, possess better opportunities for examining mankind at large than seamen, though few are said to pay less attention to the detail: they mark, it has been somewhere observed, the great outlines, but leave the minuter shades of character unnoticed. In an extended sense this is not true. On the contrary, to them we owe much of our accurate knowledge of distant parts and people. But in the chicanery of men—the knowledge of the worst parts of our nature, they occasionally may, no doubt, like a celebrated member of their profession, (Lord Anson) be oftener “Round the world than in it.”

If any other apology be requisite for the following sheets, it may be found in the pages of a journal * little prone to encourage useless publications.

“The journals of military men are given to the public much more frequently than they used to be; and we consider this class of publications as one of great utility and importance. The duties of such men lead them into countries very little known to Europeans, and give to them the means of observing and describing very striking peculiarities in manners, habits, and governments. To lay these before the public, is a praiseworthy undertaking, and if done simply and modestly, deserves great encouragement.”

* Edinburgh Review, Vol. XXII. Page 67—8.

NARRATIVE

or

A Voyage in the Indian Seas,

By JAMES PRIOR, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR, *Off the Cape of Good Hope, Aug. 21, 1810.*

ON the 22d of June, 1810, his majesty's Ship *Nisus*, a fine new frigate, of the first class, commanded by Captain Philip Beaver, an officer of distinguished merit, sailed from Plymouth Sound, bound to the Cape of Good Hope. Nothing particular occurred until the 29th, when we came in view of the *Desertas*, commonly termed by the sailors *Deserters*,—consisting of barren fragments of rock and earth, disjointed at some remote period from the main land of Madeira. The appearance of the latter island charmed us. The day was calm; the sun shone with a fervour to which we had been unaccustomed; the land, rising abruptly from the water's edge to a considerable height, topped with wood, and the sides variegated by a luxuriant vegetation intermixed with several vineyards and detached white houses, combined to produce the happiest effect; added to which we were at that convenient distance which a painter would have chosen, where the more striking beauties, though not the defects of the landscape, could be distinguished.

The illusion, however, vanishes the moment you enter the town of Funchall, the only one in the island; for here, instead of meeting with nymphs, shepherds, and enchanters, the eye reposes on bald-headed monks and bare-legged peasants,—while the purse is assaulted at almost every step by importunate beggars. That this is not fairy land there are other undoubted proofs; narrow uncouth streets strewn with dirt and decayed vegetables, requiring rain only to afford ample materials for the scavenger,—dull, sequestered houses, which look like prisons,—a few churches, built without taste,—many of the lower class of people without apparent employment,—and last, though not least in importance,—several large ill-looking store-houses, filled, however, with good wine, of which an East India fleet in the bay was then taking in a due proportion.

There is nothing elegant in the town,—nothing like neatness, except indeed, and it is an extraordinary exception,—

VOYAGES and TRAVELS, No. 2. Vol. I.

P

the interior of a chapel, named Golgotha, from being lined with skulls and other human bones, whimsically collected in this receptacle, and most carefully arranged; and by means of which some of the fathers levy contributions on strangers, by shewing these remains of mortality, as belonging to deceased members of their order.

Funchall bay is fully as uninviting as the town. The winds enter it almost without interruption, to the great dread of the mariner, and so might an enemy, were he sufficiently adventurous; the anchoring ground is likewise bad, and a continual surf beats on the beach, rendering it frequently difficult to land without the risk of a good ducking. The view, however, from it, in which the Loo rock, the forts, such as they are, the convent near the summit of the mountain, to which all strangers bend their way as a matter of course, form the more striking objects, is in many respects beautiful.

The well-known salubrity of the climate of Madeira occasionally invites some of our countrymen here as invalids, from their native frosts and fogs, when assailed by complaints of the lungs. Frequently it is useful, prolonging at least the term of life, if it does not effectually cure its diseased afflictions. The novelty, the scenery, the assemblage of so many objects totally unlike any thing to be found in Britain, all contribute to form a panacea for the fretful spirit and disordered frame of the sufferers; but with regard to enlightened society, or liberal institutions, either public or private, he must submit to many privations. The resident English merchants, however, support, as they do every where, the national character for liberality and hospitality.

We had scarcely anchored, when a number of boats, filled with people of all ages, surrounded the ship, in order to sell their wares. Both sexes, from constant exposure to the sun, seem little better than a remove from mulattoes; the men possess good manly features; the women, with two or three exceptions, are commonly thin and shrivelled, arising, perhaps, from frequent exposure to the weather; as, in addition to their domestic duties, they labour in the fields, attend the markets, and go off to sell their produce to the fleets in the bay. We had now an opportunity of witnessing, what has been so often dunned in our ears by the French journalists and politicians, I mean the wonder-working effects of English gold. One of the officers, in making a purchase, produced a guinea in payment, when it excited so much joy and contention among a groupe of rival candidates, who should possess the prize, that, alarmed for the safety of his property, he quietly re-conveyed it to his pocket till their transports had somewhat abated.

We set sail from Madeira, and two days after, Palma, one of the Canary islands, rather more than fifty miles distance, was plainly discerned; in the evening we saw Ferro, another of the same cluster. Turning now out of the usual track, we steered within the Cape de Verd islands, in expectation of meeting with some French vessels reported to be returning to Europe with the plunder of the English Indiamen; and hope, on one occasion, cheated us for some hours. A large warlike-looking ship was discovered in the precise route alluded to; but, contrary to our expectations, she turned out to be a Liverpool Guineaman returning home,—an object, certainly, of curiosity. No longer able to deal in men, the captain seemed to have revenged himself on the brute race; for the decks and rigging were crowded with monkeys, parrots, and other birds and beasts, screeching incessantly, while the yells of hundreds of others issued from below; these, with the lumber of casks and packages, ropes and spars, which left not an inch of the decks unoccupied, added to the burnt faces, the red caps and shirts, and arms steeped to the elbows in tar, of the crew, bestowed on her the semblance of a floating menagerie, or a fragment of the woods accidentally driven to sea.

On the 16th of July, within five degrees of the equator, an alarm occurred in the night by the report of two vessels being engaged; this, however, proved a mistake; both were English merchantmen, bound to Rio de Janeiro, making signals with lights. One of them astonished us not a little. On being hailed, the master said he had been out four months, had seen the coast of Brazil three weeks before, had been driven off by contrary winds; and though now by our chronometer in 14° west longitude, he calculated on being in 23°, making a difference of more than five hundred miles in the real situation of his vessel! Whether the influence of *grog* or of a bad compass had occasioned this extraordinary error we did not stop to examine; it is recorded, however, that an East Indiaman was once a thousand miles out of her reckoning.

Four days afterwards we crossed the line, but omitted the usual ceremonies, as inconsistent with the dignity preserved on-board his majesty's ships; so that Neptune, Amphitrite, and their attendant Tritons, drawn on triumphal cars, and daubed with soot and red-ochre; together with the examination of strangers, arrived in their watery majesties' territories, and the whole process of shaving, ablution, and forfeits, were, to the great joy of those who had never undergone these ceremonies, dispensed with.

Early in the morning of the 1st of August, the island of Trinidad was in sight. This spot, unlike its namesake in the

West Indies, is one of those bleak and barren fragments of rock and earth, scattered throughout the ocean for we know not what wise purposes of Providence. It is about eight miles in circumference, high and rugged, and difficult of access from continual surf lashing the shore. A few rivulets of fresh water run into the sea, and scattered shrubs have sometimes afforded vessels small supplies of fire-wood, when compelled by necessity to come hither. On one side rises a cylindrical rock of considerable height, named the Nine-pin; on the other a second, still higher, in the sugar-loaf form, surmounted by stunted shrubs, both remarkable. But a greater curiosity is a high natural arch, perforating a bluff projection of the land, through which the sea bursts with great noise and violence.

In the centre of the island, according to the information of some of our men who have landed from traders, is a small lake, containing a few fish. Wild hogs and goats, which formerly abounded, are now nearly extinct; as well as some esculent roots and wild tobacco, supposed to have been first introduced by the celebrated Commodore Johnstone, who formed a temporary colony here about thirty years ago, in order to procure refreshments for his squadron, at that time cruising in these seas. American whalers, also, sometimes leave here part of their crews to kill seals, which frequent the rock in considerable numbers; and these men, either from neglect or bad weather, are often reduced to extreme distress, being compelled for months together to exist on the rank flesh, or rather fat, of the animal.

Having now exchanged the south-east trade-wind for a fair wind, we calculated on passing over or near the supposed site of the small isle of Saxemburgh. Circumstances altered this determination; but it is remarkable, that neither this spot, nor any thing like it, is now known to exist, though minutely described by the Dutch more than a century ago as "a low, pleasant, and seemingly fruitful place." In the same way, in crossing the line, we sailed over the precise situation of a shoal, marked in several charts, and said to have been discovered by a French vessel; but could observe nothing of the kind.

The ship was soon after surrounded by flocks of the feathered tribe, well known in southern latitudes, called by the first Portuguese voyagers *pintada*, (spotted or painted,) and corrupted by our sailors to the more familiar term *potatoe* birds. They are about the size of the pigeon, and possess nearly a similar or prettier plumage; but of such undistinguishing voracity as to be easily caught with a hook and line kept floating on the surface of the water.

While admiring the dexterity of some of the crew in this occupation, an unfortunate event, too often the lot of the adventurous seaman, drew the general attention and anxiety. A fine sailor-lad, who had been in a former ship with me, doing duty aloft with some companions, missed his hold and was precipitated into the sea. The alarm was instantly given, and every effort made to arrest the rapid progress of the ship; but before this could be effected, the poor sufferer was left at a considerable distance behind. Still we could trace him in the undulation of the waves, struggling for existence; our eyes were rivetted upon him to direct the boat in endeavouring to save him, yet with no other effect than to witness the last struggles of human nature,—for just when it had arrived within arm's length, he sunk to rise no more. To increase the general regret on this occasion, it was discovered that the poor boy allowed half his pittance of pay for the support of an aged mother.

During the night, (21st of August) it being calculated that we were near the land, the ship was *brought-to*, that is, kept as stationary as possible; and at day-light next morning we saw the famed promontory of Southern Africa, about mid-way between the mouths of Table and False Bays. The atmosphere was thick and gloomy; a drizzling rain occasionally obscured the land, but when visible, nothing could be more bleak and inhospitable,—the shores being as rugged and repulsive as the very genius of inhospitality herself could wish or form them.

Steering for Simon's Bay, where large ships resort during this season, the soil every where appeared equally sterile,—nature seemed as if only just emerged from the womb of chaos,—neither tree, dwelling, quadruped, nor a human creature to be seen; a heavy surf washed its iron-bound margin; the rocks, piled tumultuously, “heaping Pelion upon Ossa,” as well as small intervening vallies, filled from time immemorial with drift-sand, seemed, in the pride of antiquity, utterly to disclaim all connection with the more humble race of plants and grass. *Hout's-bay*, a small inlet, formed the only break in this line of desolation. The sea-view had one terrific object; this was the waves fearfully breaking over a huge solitary rock, some miles from the shore, dashing the white foam to an extraordinary height.

Simon's Bay being merely a nook in the great basin called False Bay, is only distinguishable at a distance by a range of sand-hills. By degrees Government-house and gardens, the residence of the local commander of the troops, the block-house, a small fortification, and the village, caught the eye. Visitors now flocked on-board, tremblingly anxious for the news

of Europe, and greedily devouring every word which fell from our lips, as if they were the decrees of oracles: in the evening we anchored.

Cape of Good Hope, Sept. 3.

Simon's Town is so miserable a place, that a stranger at the first view is tempted to form a poor opinion of a colony so often and so highly spoken of in Europe, as being of the first importance to England. It consists of about forty houses, scattered along a bank overhanging the beach, and is itself overlooked in turn by steep barren hills of considerable height: in front lies the bay; to the left a few sand-hills; to the right Block-house Point; adjoining which is a strip of level ground, so abundant in stones, and deficient in water, as to be totally unfit for cultivation, yet forming a fair sample of the country for several miles round. The houses are neat both without and within; these, with a few small shops, an inn kept by Mynheer Vanderskaffe, for the accommodation of strangers, the barracks, and a small navy yard, compose the village.

The road to Cape Town is quite on a par with the face of the country; running either over rugged stones, or almost fetlock-deep in sand; but winding so continually round the bases of steril hills on the semicircular margins of inlets from the bay, that if, according to Hogarth's hypothesis, curved lines form the essence of beauty, this road ought to be pre-eminently beautiful.

On the verge of a creek, a strong stench proclaimed our approach to the whale-fishing establishment of False Bay. Considerable numbers of whales, from twenty to thirty feet in length, resort here between the months of May and October, and are taken by the fishermen, principally of the Malay race, in indifferent boats. The present is considered a very successful season, sixteen fish having been already cut up, and the oil extracted. Each fish on an average is valued at 1000 rix-dollars, the dollar being reckoned at eight schillings currency, or according to the present rate of exchange with England, about three shillings sterling; and half the proceeds pay all expences.

Passing through Musemburg, a military post, we directly afterwards crossed the lake, a small patch of shallow water communicating with the bay. Here we were gratified by a distant view of a few of those beautiful birds the *Flamingoes*, whose delicate shape, tapering neck, scarlet legs, and extreme shyness, formed a contrast to the coarseness of a flock of gulls, which teased us by their familiarity.

At the end of a wild tract of sand and heath, our party entered a small inn, termed the half-way-house. Mine host

proved the very pink of politeness. He received us at the door bowing with the assiduity of a French dancing-master; and, presenting his snuff-box with an air, uttered a profusion of compliments in Dutch, scarcely a syllable of which we understood.

We next came to Wynneberg, a pleasant scattered village, containing quarters for cavalry and infantry, besides being occasionally the site of a summer encampment for the troops from Cape Town. A party of the Hottentot or Cape regiment happened to be exercising at a target. These men are commonly expert marksmen, and form very useful light-troops; in figure they are commonly short and slight, yet capable of undergoing great fatigue, and usually perform nearly the whole of what may be termed the sag duties of the settlement. Originally the corps consisted of 1100 men, but does not now exceed half that number. Formerly it was supposed to be the most expensive regiment under the crown, as the uxurious propensities of the men, not content with one wife, required no less than three or four each, for whom government was obliged to provide. But the nuisance became at length so great, that the subsistence of the supernumerary ladies was wisely withheld, and these scraglios soon dispersed.

The face of the country is here altogether changed. Hitherto we had traversed almost a waste; but we now came to a fine road, running through cultivated grounds, with tall trees, and commodious country-houses, equal to any in the neighbourhood of London; while for a moment the resemblance was increased by the passing of several gay equipages.

Cape Town has been so often described, that it would be a work of supererogation minutely to retrace such beaten ground. The first view is prepossessing, and this pleasure is not diminished by a nearer acquaintance. The streets intersect each other at right angles; the houses, which are without exception white, with the wood work painted green, present a lively, and I may add, a handsome appearance, having a singular appendage in front which immediately strikes the eye of a stranger. This is a platform of earth, two, four, and even six feet high, nearly of the same breadth, and flagged or tiled according to the fancy of the owner. The *stoup*, as it is named, forms the favorite promenade of the family; and here passengers have no right to intrude, but are, by this contrivance, thrust from what ought to be the foot-path, into the centre of the street. The ascent is by a flight of steps; and on looking behind, when entering the door, I could scarcely get rid of the idea of making my way through the first-floor window.

The houses in general are large, the apartments spacious, but in our eyes seldom well furnished; during the heats of

summer many families reside almost wholly in their halls, retiring to the rooms only for the purpose of repose. The shops seem tolerably numerous; from making no display, however, they are at first difficult to be distinguished; and the streets seldom present the bustle characteristic of a commercial town.

The town-house in Market-square, the theatre in Hottentot-square, Government-house, the castle, and a range of barracks nearly opposite, form the principal public edifices. Adjoining the latter is a handsome parade, where, among the soldiers going through their evolutions, we were amused by a huge bird, nearly as large as an ostrich, marching in slow time with the precision of a drill-serjeant; and so attached is the creature become to this ceremony, that he scarcely ever fails to attend the trooping of the guard, forming at once an illustration and example to the soldiers, of the famous *goose-step*.

Half way up Government-gardens is the mansion of the governor, built something in the style of a citizen's country-box in the vicinity of London, but too confined for the accommodation of the first personage in the colony. Lord Caledon, who fills that situation, is an extraordinary favourite, both with the natives and his countrymen. He assumes so little state, that on entering the town, we passed him, near the lines, without being aware of it, till he sent an aid-de-camp to inquire whether we were the bearers of the dispatches which had arrived in Simon's bay immediately after our departure, announcing the capture of the Isle of Bourbon. Easiness of access, and punctuality in official business, added to great zeal for the prosperity of the colony, and conciliatory manners, have contributed to his lordship's popularity.

At the head of the gardens is the menagerie. Here are a lion and lioness which have often produced young; a wolf; a Cape tiger, as it is called, or rather leopard, and some others closely penned. In an adjoining inclosure are two or three species of the antelope, an ostrich, and that singular animal the *gnu*, having the mane of the horse, and the head of the ox; so incongruous indeed in appearance, as to set all our preconceived ideas of the regularity of Nature in her works, at defiance.

At the door of Government-house, I was not a little pleased to see a stuffed figure of that beautiful and stately animal the *Cameleopardalis*, it having been shot by a farmer near the boundary of the colony, and presented to the governor. Its greatest height from the fore-feet to the summit of the head, is, as nearly as I can judge, about fifteen feet; the neck long, erect, and delicately formed; the body finely proportioned, inclining on a descent from the shoulders to the flanks, so that the hind legs are shorter than the fore; grace and swiftness seem its

marked characteristics. It is remarkable that the existence of this animal, though well known to the Romans in their early African expeditions, was for many centuries doubted, till discovered in the interior about forty years ago. Vaillant, I believe, carried one to France; whether any exist in the London museums I am not aware; and even here, at so comparatively short a distance from its native forests, it forms a rare sight.

The castle is an old erection, badly situated for defence. Within it are quarters for a regiment of the line, and two companies of artillery, besides the house of the commander of the forces, the Lombard-bank, the Orphan chamber, the Printing-office, and a few other offices. The Naval Arsenal is very indifferent; vessels of size cannot approach within more than a mile of the shore, nor is there any place in the colony where men-of-war can be careened. In the *Heere Graght*, which being the constant resort of loungers, may be termed the Bond-street of Cape-town, stands the Calvinist church, where the colonial chaplain performs divine service to the English on Sundays, between the morning and afternoon services of the Dutch: and what appeared to us not a little strange, the native female part of the congregation is separated from the male; the former being ranged on chairs round the pulpit; the latter principally distributed in pews behind.—The Lutheran church in Strand-street was not, under the Dutch, permitted to have an organ.

The state of religious feeling here is perhaps as good, or rather better, than in most other colonies. Missionaries from England occasionally arrive; and accusations are sometimes laid to their charge, of bestowing upon hospitable mansions the care and attention due to the miserable haunts and wretched condition of the savage. This, perhaps, is not true. These adventurous men, notwithstanding their calling, their self-detention, and personal privations, are too often mentioned with a sneer, yet, perhaps, it would be difficult to point out a class of persons, whose labours tend more to the benefit of the human race, with, at the same time, less hope of aggrandizement to themselves.

The Moravian brethren appear to have succeeded better than the others in their important calling. The Hottentot, like all other people in a state of nature, is a wandering, idle animal, regardless of to-morrow, hating work, preferring filth and a precarious existence, with indolence, to the comforts of life accompanied by labour. The story of one who, by means of a Dutch governor here, had been some years among the whites, and on the first opportunity threw off his new dress and manners, to return to his filth and his krawl, is well known. Instances continually occur of confidential servants remaining for

years contented in their stations, and then, being suddenly seized with an idle and wandering fit, ramble they know not whither, to exist they know not how.

Aware of such habits, these missionaries collected a few stragglers into a village, taught them wants which their industry alone could supply, and afterwards erected a church. A manufactory of cutlery and small wares was next established, and appears to flourish: the specimens of the cutlery I have seen, are far from being de-picable. Much of the property of this primitive little community is in common; few are refused admission without strong grounds; none receive baptism till they have been some time domesticated; few straggle from the society; and some who may wish to be otherwise employed, are permitted to hire themselves to the neighbouring farmers. This humane establishment is situated at Bavian's Kloof, about eighty miles distant from Cape-town.

This place, some months ago, was most unexpectedly visited by the tremendous phenomenon of an earthquake, which created the more consternation, as nothing of the kind is recorded to have happened here since its settlement in 1650. It had been blowing during the day from the south-east, the prevailing summer wind, when, towards nine o'clock at night, it fell calm. Not a cloud at this time obscured the sky; the moon shone brightly; the streets were deserted; the early and sober-minded colonists, as is their custom, being on the point of retiring to rest; the waters of the bay appeared subsiding into tranquillity; and all nature on the point of enjoying that repose so salutary to man.

This state, however, was soon followed by a marked wildness in the atmosphere, very unusual, and not easily described, accompanied by a slight overcasting of the moon; to these succeeded the neighing of horses, the lowing of cattle, the howling of dogs, and a general uneasiness throughout nature, which to any one suspecting such an occurrence, might have indicated impending danger, but was now little regarded. About ten o'clock a strong, obtuse kind of explosion shook the earth violently. The inhabitants, either already in bed, or undressed to retire, quite unprepared for such an event, and many ignorant of it even from description, remained for a moment motionless with amazement,—terrified, yet scarcely knowing what to fear. A second shock, however, convinced them of its real nature; and at once all classes, breathless and agitated, hurried into the streets.

Here the confusion and terror became indescribable. The clamour of men rushing to and fro they knew not whither, the screaming of women, the cries of children, all half or wholly naked, the hollow beating of the surf on the beach, contrasted

with its former tranquillity, added to the yells of the domestic animals, formed a scene of distress appalling beyond description. The sick, the aged, and the infirm, inspired with momentary strength by their terror, sought refuge along with the others in the squares, streets, and fields, which were soon crowded with the distracted multitude, dreading instant annihilation: yet, in their anxiety to gain a place of safety, no one knew whither to fly, for no spot was secure; the houses threatened to crush them, the sea to engulf them, and the earth to open its vast and yawning bosom, and entomb them alive.

Among other strange scenes, which, but for the alarm of the moment, would have been ludicrous, was that of the barracks, out of all the doors and windows of which hundreds of naked men were seen tumbling over each other, hurrying to the parade, where, with the characteristic order of a military body, they formed; and one regiment kept the ground till the morning. The first two shocks, which occurred within three minutes, proved the most violent; others of a slighter nature were felt in the night at intervals of half-an-hour. Several of the public edifices suffered considerably, and most of the houses still bear traces, in their cracked roofs and sides, of the violence of the convulsion.

Upon the natives, the impression proved so strong, that many considered it a special visitation from heaven for their sins. Bibles and prayer-books became in such demand, that the stock in Cape-town was soon exhausted; the churches likewise received an accession of visitors, who had seldom been seen there before, and all promised well till an unlucky event damped this new-born piety. A team of restive horses having run off with a waggon, scampered past the church-door during divine service, when the congregation, alarmed by some mischievous wag with the cry of "earthquake," rushed to the door without distinction of age or sex, and had not the true cause been discovered, the consequences might have been serious. Many timid persons for some time afterwards dared not sleep in their houses, but retired to the fields and squares for the night in waggons. Even here they had no peace; for it proved an amusement for some of our young and giddy countrymen to drag these vehicles through the streets, rousing their frightened tenants from sleep, with the idea of driving post-haste to the other world.

The evening after our arrival a play was announced by native or (as in conversation they often term themselves) *Africanders*, amateurs. The piece was named "the Shipwreck," a medley of tragedy, comedy, farce, pantomime, and dance: the interior of the theatre is sufficiently neat, and the performers were, as

well as the performance, much superior to what we had been led to expect. The language, indeed, grated on the ear; but even in our estimation seemed infinitely mellowed when conveyed through the medium of some pairs of pretty pouting lips.

A ball, a few evenings afterwards, followed the play. Both were numerously attended by well-dressed females, displaying a fair proportion of personal charms; and I may remark, by the way, that they are scarcely to be seen any where else by a stranger. In vain we paraded the Heere Graght and the gardens,—and rode round the Kloof and Green point—not a respectable female face was visible, till at length we found a few enjoying the evening air on the *stoup*.

The extent of the colony, of which I shall in all probability be able to say more hereafter, is to the north-east about 600 miles; but that of the wilds, occupied by savages, beyond this line, is little more than matter of conjecture. To the credit of Lord Caledon, he has tried all the means in his power to foster the spirit of discovery. The eye of curiosity has been so long bent with a steady and eager gaze upon Africa, that this is almost one of the first duties of an enlightened local government; and the Cape offers facilities for the purpose, not only in the climate being healthy, but in setting travellers down in security so far on their way as the colonial boundary.

In September, 1808, an expedition of discovery, intended to penetrate to the Portuguese settlement of Mosambique, in about 16° S. latitude, on the eastern coast of this continent, quitted Cape-town, under the immediate patronage of the governor. The party consisted of Dr. Cowan, attached to the 72d regiment, Lieut. Donovan of the 83d, and two other Europeans, with waggons, and several Hottentots from the Cape regiment. The former gentleman was to write the journal, and to attend to objects of science; while Mr. Donovan, being a good draughtsman, was to delineate the subjects of natural history.

The last accounts from them, dated in December following, made their position 24 34 S. lat. 27 E. long. or about 300 miles beyond Orange river: even at this early period, several attendants, dreading the journey, had deserted. Several new tribes were met with; and it appears that Dr. Cowan had expressed to a friend, on the eve of his departure, his determination to take a greater range, if practicable, than at first proposed, by not merely touching at Mosambique, but penetrating to the equator, should the obstacles prove not altogether insurmountable; expressing his surprise at the same time that the missionaries, who were said to have fallen in with some new tribes, did not pursue the discovery. This appears to have given origin to an impression, that he had formed an inadequate idea of the difficulties to be encountered.

No further intelligence was received from this ill-fated party ; but reports from Mosambique state them to have been murdered by the natives, after having arrived within a few days' journey of a Portuguese factory. Mrs. Cowan, following her husband from Europe, came hither only to hear the affecting intelligence of being left a widow ; and, being but indifferently provided for, Lord Caledon, much to his honour, granted her a pension out of his private purse.*

On the 4th of September we quitted Simon's Bay, having on-board Rear-admiral Bertie, and also 100 men of the 87th regiment ; the transports for the whole of the Cape troops intended to join the expedition against the Mauritius not having arrived. A succession of contrary winds kept us buffeting about for some days off the Cape, at the same time that the ships of the enemy were known to be at sea, they having pursued several English vessels. Great fears were therefore entertained for the safety of some of the transports ; but, during a whole month of contrary winds, we met with neither friend nor enemy.

On the 2d October, at day-light, the Bamboo Mountains in Mauritius appeared at a distance, towering over the neighbourhood of Port South East, or Grand Port, the windward harbour of that island. On a nearer view, two enemy's frigates, a sloop-of-war, and a captured Indiaman, were discovered at anchor ; none of our squadron however appeared. The mountains descending gradually as we passed along the shore, terminated in a sun-burnt plain, very prettily variegated by groves and plantations, projecting into the sea to form Cape Malheureux. This point is celebrated in St. Pierre's beautiful novel of Paul and Virginia ; and the view of it now almost extracted a sigh for the fate of the unfortunate heroine who fell here a victim to the fury of the waves.

Abreast of this point, and before us, appeared a cluster of islets seemingly barren, and resorted to merely by fishermen during a relaxed blockade. Some small vessels, evidently playing truant in the absence of the English squadron, appeared sailing to and fro ; on discovering us, they fled towards Port Louis, the principal harbour situated to leeward, more compact and better adapted to naval operations than the other.—Proceeding close off its mouth the ship was hove to—a kind of challenge to the enemy when off their ports—and during the remainder of the day we continued reconnoitering ;—the whole coast and island seemed alarmed ; the men were at the batteries, and the signal-posts in activity, while the general remark on-board was—if a single frigate produces this alarm, what may not a fleet be expected to do ?—Four frigates and two sloops of

* Isle of Bourbon, October.

war were in the harbour refitting, amid a large concourse of merchant-vessels; but there appeared so much confusion and bustle among them, added to the appearance of the men-of-war, that we felt convinced something unusual, probably an action, had taken place. What appeared altogether inexplicable, was the absence of our squadron, not a vestige of which could be traced in any direction, and, in the absence of certain intelligence, conjecture was busy with the most fatal presentiments.

Tired of waiting in vain for a solution of these doubts, we stood for the Island of Bourbon, on the evening of the second day; the distance is not more than 96 miles, and the next morning the Bay of St. Paul was discerned; but a continued calm prevailing, the ship did not anchor till the following day. In the afternoon, however, Commodore Rowley and Colonel Keating, the senior naval and military officers, came on-board, repeating a narrative of a series of recent disasters of the most unexpected and distressing description. As the particulars of these disasters have been long before the public, I forbear to touch on them, and proceed to a brief sketch of the island of Bourbon.

The Isle of Mascarenhas, Bourbon, Reunion, or Bonaparte, for occasionally it is called by all these names, was discovered in the early part of the 16th century, by the Spanish and Portuguese navigators, but not settled for more than a hundred years afterwards. It was, however, frequently visited during that time, for refreshments, by voyagers to India; and of these water, birds, and fish, constituted the principal; for the vegetable tribe were not very valuable for food; and the quadruped race were confined to monkeys. But it was then, as it is now, the wise custom of seamen to deposit part of their live-stock on all the solitary islands at which they might occasionally touch: these remaining here unmolested for years, increased rapidly; and in seasons of emergency proved a certain and valuable resource. Many spots in the ocean, which would otherwise have been desolate, were thus indebted to the early providence of the Portuguese.

The island is about 150 miles in circumference, and in shape nearly circular. It rises somewhat abruptly on all sides from the sea, gradually ascending by hills piled upon hills, seemingly distinct, yet united, and terminating in what appears at a distance a great obtuse point. It may be in fact termed a huge mountain, a kind of solid cupola to this part of the Indian Ocean, the convexity being intersected here and there by deep and narrow vallies, abrupt precipices, a few small streams, and, in former times, thick and impenetrable woods. These, however, have long given way to culture and a numerous population. The summits broken by fissures into three points termed *salasses*, the highest of which is inaccessible, and estimated to be about 9000

feet above the level of the sea. Remains of subterraneous fires are found near the whole, and on one of them, an old crater.

The present volcano by which Bourbon has been for several years distinguished, lies on the south side of the island, not more than half a dozen miles from the sea. The approach to the crater is so difficult, that few persons, I understand, even though resident here, make the attempt: those who have been more curious on the subject, or more enterprising, say it does not repay the fatigue; for the adventurer must laboriously drag on foot through masses of lava, cinders, and vitrified earths, added to the difficulty of ascending and descending clefts, and rocks, and a stony crumbling soil. Occasionally it makes a rumbling noise like thunder under ground, seeming to threaten that, although not mischievous hitherto, it may in time become so. Very lately the English were alarmed by a discharge of smoke and flame; no devastations, however, have been committed here, at least within our knowledge, by streams of burning lava, as in other less favoured spots. The soil of the island is in general good, except in the more elevated parts, which are coarse, stoney, and barren. The vallies however amply compensate for this deficiency by an abundant return to the labour of the planter: a few of the ravines, the sides of the hills, and the more level spots between the sea and the higher grounds, may be likewise considered fruitful. Coffee and cotton constitute the staple commodities. The former however does not flourish equally well throughout the island, and from some unexplained cause seems to have declined lately in value. The plant was introduced more than a century ago by traders to Mocha; the soil appeared congenial, and the first hopes of success were in a few years confirmed by crops of a superior quality. Among the French, it has always borne the reputation of being second only to that of Arabia, and, along with the produce of Java, commonly brings a higher price in the market than the coffee of the West-Indies: the east would therefore seem the favourite region of this shrub. The average annual produce is about 60,000 bags, containing each one hundred weight. This it is said might be nearly doubled were there a sure market open for its disposal; but the war greatly impeded the intercourse with France; and at present neither England nor India needs coffee; so that a bag which formerly cost twelve, fifteen, and even eighteen Spanish dollars, may now be procured for the one half.

The cotton has been equally prized for its quality. Thirty years ago it was an article of the first consequence, returning a considerable profit to the planter; but lately the frequent recurrences of blights, and the havoc occasioned by insects, have induced the cultivators to turn their attention to other objects. The quantity raised, according to report, may be above 200,000lbs.

In 1770 Mons. Poivre, a man of distinguished science and li-

terary attainments, and who held a high official situation in the island, introduced the clove and nutmeg from the Moluccas. The former flourishes, and proves a source of considerable emolument: the tree, though small, is several years in reaching maturity. Neither is the crop at all times certain, being sometimes plentiful, sometimes the contrary; but always less than in the parent soil,—such are the distinctions of exotics. The annual produce is nearly 130,000lbs.

The genuine nutmeg has failed in Mauritius and Bourbon, as it has indeed in all other places except its native spot of Banda. Nevertheless about 3000lbs. of the oblong, or inferior kind, are raised and consumed here by the natives. Cinnamon has been still more unsuccessful than either the clove or nutmeg; for though several specimens of the tree exist, a slight degree of flavour only is perceivable in the bark. Pepper has likewise altogether failed. Indigo makes a better return for the labour bestowed on it; but it either succeeds better, or is more attended to, I understand, in Mauritius. Some other tropical products of less importance exist in the gardens, either for the purposes of ornament or curiosity; and formerly the island abounded with ebony, of which few vestiges at present remain.

Bourbon, among productions of the first importance to its population, affords abundance of wheat, maize, potatoes, cassava, (*jatropha*) and yams, the two latter of which are principally devoted to the use of the slaves. The crops of wheat have generally produced a considerable surplus for exportation to Mauritius. Before the appearance of the English, it was understood that the latter island derived its principal supplies from Bourbon, and this was no doubt often the case; but at present the privation does not seem to affect it materially. In this island the consumption of grain is less than in the other, owing to the abundance of nutritive roots. The yam is excellent; the sweet potatoe abundant; and the common species of that most valuable root equal to any raised in Great Britain, a rare circumstance within the tropics.

Fruits are plentiful; pines, pomegranates, oranges, bananas, plantains, cocoa-nuts, melons, raspberries, and a variety of others, may be purchased for a trifle. It is remarked that the mango does not flourish, though in the sister island said to be singularly abundant: the excellence of this fruit as a pickle is well known, equally in India and in Europe. When first eaten as a fruit by strangers to the tropics, it is particularly disagreeable; the turpentine taste is nauseating, and it is thrown by with disgust; but being continually used and praised by more experienced residents, it is gradually resumed, till custom renders it pleasant.

The pasturage is so indifferent that few cattle are reared, the

principal dependance of both islands being upon continual importations from Madagascar. During war, this was not always practicable; at present, however, these importations are resumed in order to supply the troops. A trading voyage to that vast and valuable island, in the dry season, was frequently undertaken by the inhabitants, merchants and others, who received, in return for dollars, trinkets, arms, and ammunition, ample supplies of slaves, bullocks, and rice. A few small French settlements still exist on its eastern coast, but of no strength; and these are only held for the purpose of curing provisions for the cruizers of Mauritius.

Isle of Bourbon, October. •

On the morning of the 5th inst. we anchored in the Bay of St. Paul. It is formed by a slight curvature in the land, and, except during the hurricane months, esteemed a tolerable anchorage. From this place, twelve months ago, the English squadron, with equal skill and courage, cut out a French frigate and two captured English Indiamen, at the same moment carrying the same by storm. The latter, which gives name to the bay, lies scattered along the beach.—The first view from the ship appeared varied; the green foliage of trees intermixed with wooden houses, a sandy beach, the noise of the surf, the number of ships, men-of-war and others, at anchor, the landing and embarking of troops, canoes paddled by negroes, the range of hills rising in the rear of the town, abrupt or tapering, covered by a brown and scanty vegetation, all struck the eye with the inviting gloss of novelty.

Anxious to have a nearer view of the peculiarities of the new conquest, we lost no time in proceeding on shore; and, in the eagerness of landing, I had almost measured my length on the soft surface of sand and water. In the calmest weather, a surf breaks on the beach, which renders it difficult to land without being wet to the knees. During a strong breeze it is sometimes impassable. Let me here remark, that I do not recollect to have seen any where the phenomena of surf attempted to be explained. It seems to exist more on the shores of islands than of continents; yet it is scarcely so violent any where as on the Coromandel coast. Were it the mere effect of sea agitated by the wind and beating against the land, it would cease with the cause.—Were it solely produced by an extent of shallow water, it would not exist where the depth is considerable; and were the mere roll of the ocean the cause, it would prevail more on the windward than leeward portion of lands, and no spot in contact with the sea would be without it. The contrary of all this is frequently found.—It exists equally near deep and shall-

low water,—sand or rocks,—in calm or stormy weather,—on the lee as well as on the weather side,—in the most secure and sheltered caves, as on the most open coasts,—and often where most expected, is least found, and vice versa. It is generally no doubt increased by the wind; its hollow roar during the calm is, however, often more alarming than its agitation in the storm, and the noise heard at a greater distance. In the former, I have observed it makes, as it were, a deliberate and furious assault on the shore; in the latter its violence is diminished by the hasty impetuosity induced by the wind. It appears more general on the shores of volcanic islands, and is probably connected with their origin.*

On entering the town, I was struck with the aspect of the people, whose physiognomy is expressive, and the face sharp, thin, and sallow; darker, perhaps, but not unlike that of the worst cast of Italians. Several, apparently of the lower class, sauntered to and fro, viewing the new comers, the bustle of supplying the shipping in the bay, or listening to the discussions of the day at the great mart of local politics, the Post-office. None of them seemed to have employment, though apparently ready for any; each had a cigar in his mouth, his hands fixed in his pockets, and his back reclined against any occasional support that offered. A little farther on I had an opportunity of seeing that the lowest among them, who might have been usefully employed handling a spade, played an expert game at billiards. — We had previously heard of simplicity

* Extract of a letter from a French officer, of the date of 1757. The following may be adduced as a proof that the Coromandel coast, where surf so much prevails, is not free from the influence of subterranean fire.—“Just before we sailed from Pondicherry, fires broke out on the surface of the sea, three leagues from that place, throwing up pumice-stones and other matter of combustion, and forming an island a league in length, and about the same in breadth, which rose to a considerable height, and displayed a volcano making a most hideous noise, like thunder or great guns, and a cloud proceeding from it breaking into a shower of sand. This prodigy was first seen by a ship's crew belonging to Pondicherry, who at first thought it had been a water-spout, but going nearer, saw a prodigious flashing of fire, which smelt of brimstone, and heard a most astonishing noise; afterwards a vast number of fish were perceived dead on the sea, and appeared as if boiled. Sailing a little farther they met with such quantities of pumice-stones, that it was hardly possible to make through them; at the same time they discerned land, but it appeared as a cloud of fire and smoke on the surface of the sea, and which, ascending into the air, distilled in showers of rain, casting abundance of sand on the ship's deck. Being nigh to the flashes of fire, they were under great consternation; but it pleased God to send a little breeze of wind that took them from it. Another ship sailed round it; but they were so becalmed, that the ashes proceeding from the vast fire fell on the deck, and the vessel was in great danger of being burned.”

of manners prevailing here; but almost began to believe such a thing quite inconsistent with the organization of French society, when a house was pointed out containing a family of brothers, sisters, uncles, nephews and nieces, all living without restraint in the state of Adam's immediate progeny!

The appearance of the slaves strongly interested our feelings as well as curiosity. They are not at all like those of the Cape. The latter belong to the Malay race, intermixed with the European and Hottentot, something below the middle stature, well dressed, and seeming something like the inmates of a civilized habitation. The wretched people I now saw appeared only temporary emigrants from their native woods;—large, sturdy, broad-shouldered Africans, untamed in their aspect, and all but naked. A single strip of rag round the waist forms the only covering of the men belonging to the government offices? the women, without any regard to the sex, even though in its savage state, with scarcely any thing more to cover them.

St. Paul, once the capital of the island, but at present the second only in rank, is a straggling place about a mile in length, situated on the verge of the bay. Behind it, and to the left, rise some hills remarkable only for their nakedness and sterility. The sun-beams being concentrated here strike down on the tract of sand beneath, on part of which stands the town; the houses, with some exceptions, are constructed of wood; the greater part being detached from each other, enjoy the advantage of gardens and trees, which, added to latticed, or open windows, freely admitting the sea-breeze, render the apartments more cool than might be expected. In the night these are rarely closed in the upper rooms, the air being dry and productive of no ill effects. Neither are the mosquitoes, the most annoying foes to quiet repose, both by their bite and hum, very troublesome; they are at least excluded from the bed—and I may add—the blood of their destined victims, by curtains of gauze which bear their name.

Few of the private houses are either large or striking in appearance. Several of the better sort form public offices for the exigencies of our government, depôts for stores and provisions, accommodations for troops, and quarters for officers, civil and military. The shops are paltry, and without any diversity of wares. The streets are sandy and irregular. To the right, two or three batteries, one of which likewise commands the anchorage, defend it from the advance of an enemy. This, however, is the most practicable route by which to assail St. Paul; and by which, notwithstanding the batteries, it has twice within a year submitted to our arms.

of rain occur during the hurricane months, no ill consequences follow, the winds of that period, probably, carrying off any noxious exhalations that may have arisen. In general the sky is clear and serene, the dews at night not troublesome, the breeze refreshing, some of the scenery wild and romantic, and the general appearance of Nature inviting to repose and tranquillity. She has been bountiful in other respects. Many of the productions, as well of Europe as of the tropics, spring up with little culture; all the necessaries of life are in abundance; the people may be pure and happy if they think proper; and under the equitable government of England, property is not only secure, but capable of considerable increase.

I have not yet been enabled to gain an accurate statement of the amount of the population; but in round numbers it is said to exceed 100,000. This, however, is certainly too high an estimate. A more moderate calculation makes the whites along with their half-cast offspring, not more than 10,000; free people of colour about 4000; slaves, probably, nearly 50,000. The latter may be, possibly, below the truth, the capitation-tax rendering it the interest of the owners to conceal their real numbers; but in 1776, according to the Abbé Raynal, they were no more than 26,125; so that, allowing for an ample increase in concurrence with the constant slave-importing partialities of the people, the numbers above stated, from the authority of a respectable resident, will be found nearly correct.

The public revenue, arising from the duty on slaves, on horses, arrack-houses, custom-house licences, and other incidental sources, amounted, under the late French governor, St. Suzanne, to something less than 300,000 Spanish dollars annually. The foreign commerce of the island, even in its better days, centered principally in Mauritius. The former might be called the country of which the latter was the town and port, the merchants there having more capital, connections, and ships, as well as the still greater advantage of harbours to give it the requisite degree of vigour. The produce of Bourbon occasionally supplied Pondicherry in a period of peace, or was exported to France, which in return sent out cargoes adapted to the trade with the natives of Madagascar, or of the African continent, and the Arabs of the island of Zanzibar, and of their capital, Muscat, in the Persian Gulf.

Bourbon, therefore, being without harbours, is not of material value to either England or the Mother-Country. It is likewise to leeward of the Isle of France, and, consequently, an unfavourable point at which to assemble an armament against the latter; neither does it appear, it was said, the

sole dependance of that island for food. Mauritius, indeed, concentrates the power of both; the venom lies there; subject it, and a death-blow is struck at once to the importance of both, for Bourbon must then quietly submit, or at any rate be totally deprived of the power of doing harm. But in case of the former being unassailable, a very improbable supposition, from all the intelligence that can be gleaned here; then, indeed, it will become a near, watchful, and annoying neighbour.

• • •
Off Mauritius, Nov. 19.

In ten days after our arrival at Bourbon, the squadron was reported in a fit state to proceed to sea, and sailed accordingly. It consisted of the *Africaine* of forty-six guns, bearing the flag of Rear-admiral Albemarle Bertie; *Nisus*, forty-six; *Boadicea*, forty-four; and *Nereide*, (late French *Venus*) forty-four. The *Ceylon*, thirty-six, and *Staunch* brig, were ordered to proceed with transports direct to Rodriguez; and the *Otter* sloop had been previously dispatched to England. General Abercrombie and suite, along with six officers and nearly two hundred men of the flank-battalion, (twelfth and thirty-third regiments,) embarked in the *Nisus*.

It was nearly a week before we gained our station off Port Louis, in Mauritius. The enemy seemed not a little alarmed at our speedy appearance in the character of assailants, after so many disasters; several shots passed near the flag-ship; the batteries were all manned; the furnaces for heating shot on *Tonnellier* island, forming one side of the entrance to the harbour, smoking, as it were *in terrorem*, to what the islanders term, the desperate English. The preparations could scarcely have been greater had the whole armed force of India appeared on the shores; and such is the general dread of the inhabitants, that this compliment is often paid to the enterprize of a single English man-of-war. An equal, or superior, French force, however, lay in the port; *La Bellone*, forty-eight; *La Minerve*, forty-eight; *La Mancha*, forty-eight; *L'Astrée*, forty-four; the captured English frigates, *Iphigenia*, forty-two, and *Nereide*, thirty-six; the *Victor*, twenty, and the *Entrepénante*, sixteen; but it must be observed, that the enemy had not seamen enough to man the whole of these vessels at once. No reinforcements appeared to have arrived from Europe since we had formerly surveyed it, ignorant of our danger; except merely that the vessels then in Grand Port had been brought round, the *Boadicea* having ascertained this by looking into that harbour.

The admiral now proceeding in the *Africaine* to Rodriguez, General Abercrombie left the *Nisus* to accompany him. Captain

Beaver, being appointed to conduct the important operation of disembarking the army, likewise quitted us to make the preliminary arrangements there along with the commanders-in-chief. Commodore Rowley remained with his own ship, the *Boadicea*, *Nisus*, and *Nereide*, to blockade Port Louis. In a few days, however, the *Nisus* took her station about sixteen miles to windward, thus forming an advanced-guard to the squadron, which was strengthened by several detachments from the Indian cruizers.

Off the northern shore of Mauritius are four islets, namely, Round, Serpent, Flat, and Quoin Islands, the two former being surrounded and rendered almost inaccessible by rocks, but destitute of any thing to attract or gratify curiosity. Round Island, the farthest from the main, is about equi-distant from Grand Port and Port Louis, and formed a central resort for our cruizers during a remission of strict blockade to intercept vessels bound to either. The Quoin de Mer, or Gnnner's Quoin, so called from its shape, is within a mile and a half of Mauritius: its wedge-form renders it remarkable; it produces the tornato, or love-apple, and we found on it a few hares, and an abundance of sea-fowl, particularly the tropic-bird, or, as the sailors term it, the boatswain-bird, having a long feather, coloured red and white, in the tail.

Flat Island, the best and largest of the group, off which we anchored, lies about five miles from the main. It is divided into the greater and less by a shallow arm of the sea, but connected to windward by a reef of massive rocks, covered at high-water, and forming a natural barrier to the violence of the swell. Within it the water is smooth as in a pond, boats entering freely to leeward. At low-water, during neap-tides, the bed of this inlet is in many places dry, and the reef being exposed to its base, admits of an easy and dry passage on foot from the larger to the smaller islet.

When it is nearly, or quite, uncovered, vast, yet regular, beds of that singular submarine substance called by us bastard coral, and by the French *madrepore*, are to be seen, appearing like a field of very small shrubs, just sprouting from the bosom of the earth, and having all the branching luxuriancy of vegetation, but displaying it more regularly. It might be taken, indeed, for a species of tiny shrubbery, growing, or seeming to grow, under water. This curious production is here not more than a foot high; some portions rise by a single trunk, others by more than one; but both give off numerous branches, all as regular on the surface as a newly-clipped hedge, and so closely interwoven, that they would form, were the substance hard, a most complex and impenetrable net-work. It is commonly of a dirty brown

colour, is nearly as brittle as glass, and the smallest portion indented with minute pits, as if pricked with a pin. In general, the beds are covered by a few inches of water; and when destroyed, are frequently known to be reproduced.

Naturalists universally agree, that the madrepore is the work of certain small marine animals, named zoophytes; the substance itself is carbonate of lime. The extensive structures of it which pervade this ocean are wonderful; they give us the highest idea of the industry and power of the most minute created beings; and this, too, exerted in a situation where it might least be expected. The sea, indeed, has its tenants, from the largest to the least, as well as the land; and, if ants surprise us by their labours, their industry and skill, on the latter, it will not seem strange that submarine life should display equal vigour and perseverance in its peculiar province. The zoophytes may be termed the ants of the ocean. Islands, it is supposed, have been formed by the madrepores gradually growing to the surface of the water, and becoming joined together, or condensed as it were, into solid rock by time; then gradually strewed with sand from the sea, and with vegetation by seeds brought by the birds. Smaller Flat Island looks like a place thus formed; the theory, however, from what I have observed, appears to me to be more specious than solid.

Larger Flat Island abounds with small, but not ill-flavoured, hares, which in the dearth of live-stock make an acceptable addition to a sea-dinner; several of these have been killed with sticks. Curlews seem the only birds worth shooting, but, though numerous, they are excessively shy: the Pigeon Rock, a large mass of stone, about one hundred yards from the islet, and the access to which is dry at low water, forms a great resort for sea-fowl. Fish sometimes are plentiful, at other periods scarce, as if they migrated; and it requires expert fishermen, added to all the art of the line, seine, and spear, or at least its substitute, the boarding-pike, to secure them. Many of these, not larger than a mackarel, are characterized by the most vivid colours, green, yellow, red, or light-blue; some possess them all united, and, like the well-known dolphin, display their utmost perfection in the struggles of death. The green, or parrot-fish, so called by us from the colour and head resembling those of that bird, bears such an exquisite hue, that I scarcely think it can be imitated by art. This species is found at low water in the crevices of the reef connecting the islets, and taken only by spearing, an exercise in which some of the officers have become nearly as expert as any of the wild islanders of the South Seas.

Flat Island is about four miles long and two broad, covered by strong grass, among which is that tufted species which, when split and dried, is made into hats by the seamen. The cotton-shrub also grows here. Myriads of lizards occupy the ground, the rocks, the shrubs, the grass, and the sand; but there are none of the larger species named guana. The body is not more than ten or twelve inches in length, and about an inch in diameter, the shape being precisely that of an alligator in miniature. It is the most harmless of creatures, and, as if conscience of its innocence, so familiar, that when we sit down under the bushes, these animals collect around and seem to examine us, playing with the sand or shrubs, and gambling over our feet without apprehension.

During the nights, our boats have constantly quitted the ship, in order to survey the shores of Mauritius for a fit place to disembark the army; this duty is entrusted to the masters of some of the men-of-war, and one or two officers of engineers.

On the night of the 14th instant, (November,) one of our cutters dispatched on this service, with a lieutenant,* a fine enterprising fellow, and fourteen men, was captured; at least this was conjectured at the time, for at day-light a fire of musquetry, in the direction he had been ordered to explore, was observed from the mast-head, and though assistance was immediately dispatched, no traces of the boat could be found. The next night furnished an opportunity of retaliating: a schooner being discovered standing for Port South-east, was boarded and taken by the boats of the *Hesper*, and proved to be from France with dispatches. Général de Caen has made proposals to Commodore Rowley to send the English prisoners on the island to the Cape of Good Hope, in cartels furnished by himself. The object evidently is to rid the place of men who, in the event of a landing, might be troublesome, should an opportunity offer. Others think, that, despairing of being able to resist the English forces, he wishes to send off the frigates, deprived of their guns; but protected by the neutral character of cartels. The offer was instantly rejected. Their fate must soon be decided by force of arms; and we shall then release our countrymen, who are prisoners, on cheaper terms than exchange.

On the whole this is an anxious period. Day after day we have been expecting the expedition. The delay has seemed

* Lieutenant Bowler, R. N. It was subsequently ascertained, that the boat, after reaching the shore, was in a few moments left dry on a bed of coral, at a considerable distance from the sea, by the sudden fall of the tide.

unusually long, though doubtless unavoidable ; but obscure reports of its being retarded, or altogether abandoned, have occasionally wound us up to the highest pitch of impatience.

Port Louis, Mauritius, Dec. 10.

On the 24th November, the signal-post announced a vessel of war, which, as we expected, proved the flag-ship of Admiral Bertie, whom we joined in the evening. He had preceded the fleet to make arrangements; and, in order to deceive the enemy, the ships stood farther to sea. It appeared that the delay of the armament at Rodriguez arose from the non-arrival of the Bengal and Cape divisions of troops. But the bad season being at hand, measures were at length taken to make the attack with those of Madras and Bombay, aided by the disposeable force of the fleet. At the moment, however, when the ships were weighing anchor for this purpose, the Bengal division came in sight and joined the fleet without touching at the rendezvous.

Light winds, and the scattered state of the transports, rendered it for a few days imprudent to approach the island. On the morning of the 29th, however, the breeze being particularly favourable, and the day one of the finest that could be chosen, the fleet stood toward the shore; in front appeared the rugged reef and sun-burnt hills and vallies of the prize for which we were to contend; behind followed more than sixty sail of large vessels, filled with armed men anticipating victory, and steering steadily and rapidly to the point of debarkation. This spot was *Maïon Bay*, formed by a small curve in the land, and discovered in the night-excursions of our boats. It is situated in the strait dividing Mauritius from the islet called the Quoin, and which had been hitherto scarcely known to the English as a practicable channel for shipping. The bay was undefended, as far as could be ascertained, by works; and an opening in the reef promised to admit as many boats abreast as would suffice to land the first division of the army.

In the mean time signals to "prepare for battle,"—"Have troops in readiness for landing,"—"Supply three days' provisions," and others, occupied the attention of those who had not more active duties to perform. We anchored a little after twelve o'clock, something less than a mile from the shore; on the beach all was quiet; not a gun or a soldier was to be seen. Two brig-of-war took their stations close to the opening in the reef, to sweep the woods with grape, in case of opposition, while the flag-ship (*Africaine*) and *Nisus*, remaining a little without, covered them; several other frigates, with the *Illustrious*, seventy-four, and transports, kept still farther out, but

as near as the crowded state of the anchorage permitted. This, however, is very extensive, the water being likewise deep, and so clear, that, though several fathoms below the surface, the beds of coral under the bottom of the ship were as distinct to the eye as the paper on which I write.

I have already said, that Captain Beaver, who had again joined us, was charged with the very important duty of disembarking the army. The arrangements made by him were such, that in little more than an hour two thousand men had been embarked, the boats placed in their proper stations, and preceded and flanked by gun-boats: the whole of the division now moved toward the shore, presenting a most magnificent and interesting spectacle. Its order will be fully comprehended by the annexed plan. While pulling to the beach, we on-board could not but feel the most lively anxiety for the event, and continued gazing intently till we saw the troops land, form, and advance, without a musket being fired. The explosion of a magazine in Grand Bay, two or three miles to the westward, seemed as if the enemy intended to retreat and make a stand nearer to Port Louis.

In the course of the evening almost the whole of the army *materiel* was disembarked. Part of the reserve had moved forward, soon after landing, in a parallel line with the beach; but turning off by a better route more inland, met with a picquet of the enemy: one of our late companions,* a gallant enterprising soldier, along with several of his men, were severely wounded. Next morning we understood the army had halted at midnight about six miles from the place of debarkation; and here our information for the present rested.

In the forenoon of the 30th, the *Nisus* was detached down the coast to assail any practicable point which might offer, as well as to open a communication with the troops the first favourable moment. Off *Cannoniére Point*, a strong work toward the sea, and about six miles from the *Quoin*, we stopped for a few minutes, but within it all seemed quiet; thick woods, however, obscured the march of the army, and we could find no clue to ascertain its position. About five o'clock in the evening, having approached pretty near to the batteries in *Turtle bay*, about 60 of our men were dispatched against them in the gun and flat boats; they gained possession without opposition, the enemy precipitately retreating, and leaving a few matches lighted: no further intelligence transpired, and the night passed without any alarm.

* Lieut. Ash, 12th Regiment.

A little after six next morning, (December 1st,) we were roused by a smart cannonade, renewed at intervals for about an hour, from a hill nearly abreast of our position. Shortly afterwards a column of English troops approached the anchorage; it consisted of the 69th regiment; but the batteries being already dismantled, and the enemy fled, the right flank of the army, which this movement was intended to cover, was already secure from interruption. The communication, however, being thus opened, supplies of provisions were forwarded to the camp.

In the forenoon of the following day the general came on-board; he seemed much fatigued, but in high spirits, for this was the first moment of remission from anxious duties in which he could pretend to indulge in the luxuries of ablution and clean linen. A flag of truce had appeared at the camp with offers of capitulation on extravagant terms; among others, demanding permission for the French troops and men-of-war to proceed to France without interruption: the former was granted, the latter refused, and the surrender took place in due form. The fleet, with the Cape troops on-board, arrived and anchored off Port Louis in the course of the day.

It appears that, after the halt of the first night, the troops moved forward early in the morning, through woods and difficult roads, suffering severely from want of water. A captain of an Indiaman died, as is said through fatigue, most probably from a stroke of the sun; and some of the Bengal Sepoys, unable to keep pace with the Europeans, were left behind. In the afternoon a halt took place at *Moulin à poudre* (powder-mill) in front of which lay a considerable wood. From this they were immediately reconnoitered by General de Caen, attended by about sixty dragoons, who with great boldness advanced close to the English lines; the general, it is said, had more than one musket-ball through his clothes, and General Vandermassen, the second in command, was slightly wounded. In advancing next morning through the same wood, a more regular attack was made by the enemy's light-infantry, well screened by the nature of the country, but they were speedily driven back. In their retreat, the planks were torn off a wooden bridge over the river *Seche*, so as to prevent the transport of the field-pieces, dragged thus far by the incessant labour and indefatigable perseverance of the scamen: but this zealous body, with a contrivance peculiar to themselves, ran them down one bank across the bed of the stream, at this season of the year nearly dry, and up the other to the head of the column, with equal decision and dexterity.

Beyond the wood the main body of the French was drawn

up, seemingly determined to dispute a nearer approach to the town. Its right extended to a hill that directly overlooked all the movements of the English army, and before the latter could form, on emerging from the wood, received it with a sharp fire of grape and musquetry, which occasioned some loss and a momentary confusion. The reserve, however, rushing to the charge, the enemy in an instant gave way, leaving some artillery and tumbrils to the victors; nor ceased to fly till they found themselves secure in their lines. Our troops, however, continued to advance, notwithstanding they were galled by the fire of a battery to the left; but having no object to answer here, retrograded in the evening out of gun-shot. In the morning the flag-of-truce came out, the terms were settled, and on the 3d the advanced-works were occupied by the British grenadiers.

Thus ended this little campaign, very short, very successful, but, on account of the trifling numbers of the enemy, not of a description to be called brilliant. The British force, including seamen and marines acting on shore, amounted to more than 10,000 men; that of the French to about 800 regulars, 600 seamen, who could be spared from the ships and sea-batteries, and between 2,000 and 3,000 militia; who, according to the statements of the more regular soldiers, were of too brittle a composition to encounter the rude shock of blows and battles, but were merely drawn out for show. Never indeed at any period has the military force of the island been formidable; it was strongest perhaps at the time when De Caen first arrived in 1803, having then just escaped from the gripe of Admiral Rainier in Pondicherry Roads. The loss on our part amounted to 150 killed and wounded. I need not say that the troops behaved well in action; or that they were supported with equal spirit by the seamen.

We did not enter the harbour of Port Louis till the 7th of December: it is scarcely possible to conceive any view more interesting than the one at that moment before us. Our attention was continually divided by the variety of objects; Port Louis, I may safely assert, was never before so crowded with what I may term animated timber: it was a forest of masts, a bason filled with vessels of all sorts and sizes, from the formidable display of a line-of-battle-ship, to the humble figure of a canoe something larger than a butcher's tray, scooped out of a single piece of wood. The British flag waved triumphantly on all the batteries; British men-of-war rode where none I believe ever anchored before; Indiamen, transports, prizes, ships of all kinds, displayed English colours over the French. At the same time innumerable boats were plying to and fro, filled with faces

of various import, naval and military officers, captains of Indiamen, soldiers, sailors, lascars, negroes, Frenchmen; some hurrying on business, others on pleasure, many incited by gain, more by curiosity—all contributing to form a novel and singular spectacle.

On shore still more amusement was afforded to an unconcerned spectator; crowds of people blocked up the streets in earnest conversation about passing events. Military and naval men calculated their next destinations, traders inquired after cargoes, individuals about private property, the authorities respecting the public, the inhabitants busy and loquacious, tugged at each others' buttons the more strongly, I presume, to impress their arguments; while slaves, almost naked, dragged horse-loads through the streets, and English and French uniforms, no longer in hostility, intermixed with, and varied the groups of civilians. Here, on a patch of earth in the Indian Ocean, many thousand miles from their native soil, might be contrasted John Bull with his French adversary, the florid European with the pale creole, the Asiatic with the Negro, besides an infinity of mongrels of all nations, while their complexions were as various as the countries which gave them birth, embracing every possible tint and hue between pure white and jet-black: the confusion of tongues was equally great.

Not the least novelty were the Sepoys, a fine-looking body of men in general, new to many of the English, as well as to the Islanders, who affected to look upon them with contempt. General de Caen publicly held out, that whoever should capture a Sepoy should have him for a slave; but the militia seemed to think this might be catching a Tartar, for few liked to make the attempt. The town, though in a bustle, was orderly and in perfect security. So little had our invasion disconcerted the ordinary routine of affairs, that the shops were all open, and their owners seemed to have more business than they could well attend to. The houses serving for taverns were crowded with visitors strolling in occasionally for refreshment, either from the fleet or the camp.

Mauritius, December.

According to the most accurate measurement, Mauritius, or the Isle of France, is about thirty-five miles in length, and twenty-seven in extreme breadth, though, in general, little more than two-thirds of this width. The circumference along the shores is about 115 miles. Much diversity exists on its surface, of hill and plain, wood and plantation, a tolerable soil in some parts, intermixed with a vast multitude of loose stones and disjointed rock, besides several considerable mountains. The principal of

these surround Grand Port, Port Louis, Black River, and Cape Brabant, and have various appellations. The former commonly receive the name of the Bamboo Chain: behind Port Louis are Montagne du Port, Le Piton, Le Pouce, Pieter Botte, and a few others; near Black River, the Tamarind and Red Mountains; and at Cape Brabant, Port and Brabant Mountains. The latter, and the Bamboo ridges, rise about 3500 feet above the level of the sea. A few smaller hills line the coast between Cape Brabant and Port Souillac; and another small chain runs from Pieter Bott, in the direction of Canonniere Point. Between Port Souillac and Grand Port, and from the latter to Port Louis, except in the immediate neighbourhood of both, the surface is pretty level. The central parts, which are woody and not very well cultivated, partake of the same disposition.

On account of the stoney nature of the ground, several districts are unfit for the operations of husbandry; some of the hills and roads possess the same peculiarity. None of the rocks appear to be primitive; but commonly, so far as I have seen, of the class of sand-stone, and in a state of rapid decay, breaking with little violence. Neither coal, nor rock-salt, however, the frequent associates of sand-stone, are met with. One or two iron-mines were formerly worked here; but from their unproductiveness they have been for several years discontinued; specimens of phosphate of iron, not a frequent combination in nature, are also occasionally discovered. The soil is principally a lumpy, reddish mould, evidently impregnated with oxyd of iron, and crumbling to dust in the hand. In general, however, it is of little depth; so that many places which look well to the eye, produce little or nothing for the support of life. The origin of the island is without doubt volcanic; its irregularities, the presence of lava, some pumice, and other remains of ancient fusion, which have been picked up at different times, seem to leave little doubt of the fact. Something indeed resembling the remains of a crater, I am informed, exists in one of the mountains near Grand Port. In excuse for the poverty of many parts of the soil, it is said that some districts labour under the want of irrigation. During the hurricane months, however, the island is deluged with rain, which collecting into torrents, directs its course to the sea by a variety of channels, or is speedily evaporated by the heat of the sun. But in the dry season all traces of many of these streams are obliterated; and from this cause, strangers who hear in conversation of numerous rivers with imposing names, see few till the commencement of the rainy season. The principal one, and indeed the only one which needs here be particularized, is Grand River.

Formerly this island was quite covered with woods, which have been much thinned by constant demands for fuel, buildings, and other domestic purposes. A considerable quantity, however, remains for ornament round all the plantations, which, as well as in the hilly and unfrequented parts, is thickly intermixed with brush-wood; but the timber being often shaken, or not sufficiently large, is not fit for ship-building. The iron, stinking, and red woods, are of value; the ebony bad; several of the palm tribe, besides the bamboo, tamarind, mangrove, laufel, *sago*, cocoâ-nut, and many others, differ little from these of other tropical regions.

Among the shrubs we find the lilac, jessamine, vine, clove, and pepper plant, the latter of which is barren, in addition to many others less familiar. Plantains, bananas, and melons, abound; apples and oranges are small and indifferently flavoured; peaches and grapes are likewise bad; but mangoes equal to any on the continent of India. The pamplemousse, or shaddock, which rivals the pine apple of the West-Indies in delicacy of flavour, seldom attains perfection here; the pine itself, though in my opinion good, is said by the cognoscenti in fruit, to be inferior to that of Jamaica. The mangosteen, so highly prized for richness and flavour by all people in the east, will not thrive; several trees of the leechee, a Chinese fruit, bear well; the custard-apple is fine; there are, besides, many other kinds of fruit, the names of which do not at this moment occur to me.

Spinach, asparagus, pumpkins, artichokes, cabbages, peas, beet-root, and many more of the culinary tribe, amply supply the table. Potatoes, it appears, will not grow well in this soil; but are imported from Bourbon: yams, however, are plentiful, and by their excellence make amends for this deficiency, even in the opinion of true Hibernians. The great staple food of the slaves is the *jatropha* or cassada, of which there are two species commonly known, the *jatropha janipha*, and *jatropha manihot*; the former a strong vegetable poison, which has its noxious qualities destroyed by the process of boiling; the latter merely a little narcotic in its effects, but both easily convertible into a wholesome food. The root, after being washed and well dried in the sun, is usually scraped into a coarse powder, from which the juice is expressed; it is then dried a second time, and formed into thin cakes, very similar in appearance to the barley-cakes made in Scotland. The bread thus made is named manioc. Taproca is also a product from this root by a different process; and I believe the popular farinaceous powder, called Indian arrow-root, is but a more elaborate preparation of the same substance. I may remark here,

that after taking tapioca, I have generally experienced an inclination to sleep; others, whom I have questioned, have made the same observation; so that this notice may perhaps benefit the invalid, by finding an anodyne in a palatable article of diet. The jatropa is a native of South America, whence it was brought hither at the first establishment of the colony; but, becoming in process of time despised by the whites, has for many years formed the best and most abundant food of the whole slave population.

The more valuable productions consist of sugar, indigo, coffee, cloves, cotton, wheat, maize, millet, and some others. All the spices, with the exception of cloves, have failed; either the soil or climate being unfavourable to the growth and flavour of this delicate tribe. In general, the majority of articles, though good in kind, are not very considerable in quantity, nature seeming to give a little of every thing, without being very profuse of any. The island may be compared to a great warehouse of samples; but a short time will tell whether it be capable, which I much doubt, of furnishing many cargoes. I have seen several specimens of the sugar, one of the most abundant products, raised in plantations situated between Flacq and Grand Port, which, so far as I can judge, seems little inferior to that from the West-Indies. A considerable quantity is used in the island, where it is likewise refined: those who do not chuse to be at the expence of the article thus prepared, use it in the crystallized form, which, particularly for tea, is generally preferred.

Wheat also is of the first quality; but the inhabitants have been always indebted to Bourbon for their principal supplies, in addition to constant importations of rice and bullocks from Madagascar. Formerly, after the occurrence of severe hurricanes, provisions were obliged to be sent even from the Cape of Good Hope, to prevent the people perishing by famine: from this cause, Mauritius has been commonly conceived incapable of maintaining itself, particularly during a blockade; some persons were even sanguine enough to believe that it would surrender without the trouble and expence of an armament. That the inhabitants may be to a certain degree distressed, though not starved, is probable; and I have heard, from more than one of the colonists, that a general feeling of submission prevailed among individuals, previously to the unfortunate attack upon the shipping in Grand Port; but the character of the Governor, added to the authority of the military, would have prevented any public display of this inclination.

Another material disadvantage to the internal economy of the

Island, is the scarcity of black cattle, caused by the want of good pasture land. The greater part of the cattle for consumption are imported from Madagascar, and retailed to the public at the moderate profit of seven hundred per cent., to make up for real or supposed losses during the voyage hither. The landed proprietors, who have proper pastures to support them till a period of scarcity arrives, gain much by this speculation; during the blockade, bullocks, which had cost not more than ten dollars in the former island, were sometimes sold here for one hundred and fifty. These pastures, however, are few. The common grass is rarely fit for their nourishment, except for two or three months in the year, becoming, at other times, wiry and indigestible.

Goats thrive so well, that many prefer their flesh to mutton; but there is, in truth, little difference between them and the sheep. Hogs abound, and form a material part of the food of the people: pork has a delicacy of appearance and flavour here, unknown in Europe, owing, probably, to the peculiar food of the animal within the tropics; it has, also, the recommendation of being cheap as well as nutritious. Poultry of every description is inconveniently dear, except to luxurious Indians (I mean the Anglo-Indians), who only truly exist when seated round well-covered tables. The natives, though as fond of good fare as ourselves, seldom go to any expence for it.

The coast contributes pretty liberally to the table, in bream, plaice, coal-fish, and some others not unlike mackerel. Crabs and lobsters are occasionally found; oysters are more rare, at least I have not yet seen any; but the smaller shell-fish abound on all the shores. Turtle have almost wholly disappeared, from the avidity with which they were pursued by the fishermen. But all the sandy islets, situated to the north-west of Mauritius, afford them in abundance, very large and fine, of which the small traders, returning direct to this island, occasionally make a good speculation; but these animals do not sustain the fatigues of a voyage so well as those of the West-Indies. Large eels, of the conger species, now and then taken by the fishermen, are said to strangle the port-divers of Port Louis, who, being often sent down to clear the moorings of ships, sometimes do not return.

The wild animals formerly included hogs, goats, hares, and deer; the latter small and of a grey colour, introduced by the first voyagers. A few which still exist in the woods and mountains near Black River, along with partridges, pigeons, teal, and a few wild geese, give employment to a keen sportsman.

The *Dodo*, a large, clumsy, and singular bird, which, like

the ostrich, could not fly, was formerly found here according to naturalists, but is now extinct. A variety of small birds, besides monkeys, occupy the woods.

The domestic animals for pleasure, consist of horses, mules, and asses; but the two latter are principally used for the saddle; and, from their hardihood, more easily supplied with food, which is scarce in the island. The horses are few in number, and seldom bred on the spot; they are said to degenerate very soon; this, the natives say, will be, likewise, the fate of the Cape and India breeds, many of which have been brought hither by the officers of the expedition, and much admired for their strength and beauty. But so cheap is the labour of man held here, that it is but seldom either of these animals perform the drudgery for which nature has designed them. The whole falls exclusively on the shoulders of the unfortunate negro, who, toiling and sweating under the labour of dragging carts through the town, or heavy loads in the country, seems, in the opinion of the whites, the only legitimate beast of burden. Even the ass is exempted from almost all duties but that of carrying his master; and, I doubt not, were the back of the *zouave* only a little more convenient for the saddle, he would, like the ass, be made to perform that office.

The population is roughly estimated at about 100,000, in which are reckoned more than 80,000 slaves. This statement, however is certainly exaggerated. A more moderate calculation makes the whites, and their spurious offspring, between whom it is often difficult to draw the exact line of separation, about 9000, free people of colour 5000, slaves 70,000; the latter pay a capitation-tax, and their numbers are said to be recognized by the police, without including the very young children.

The annual revenue, under the late Governor General de Caen, amounted to about 200,000 dollars, or nearly 70,000*l.* sterling. This was raised by duties on coffee, sugar, cotton, &c.; a tax on houses, a poll-tax on slaves, the produce of the customs previously to the blockade, and the plunder of the English Indian men; these, added to debts, loans, bills on the French treasury, not very punctually paid, and occasional remittances by the way of America, kept the wheels of government, though clogged, still in motion. The distress, at some periods, was considerable. But the inhabitants, in general, could not complain of being oppressed, though their slaves were occasionally made to labour at the public works. The military officers commonly received no more than two-thirds of their pay. The soldiers found a scanty subsistence on less than four-pence per diem. Independently of the local revenue,

the annual expence to France, of a well-regulated government in Mauritius, would have been, I am told, nearly 200,000*l*. Additional imposts, it is said, are now to be laid on; and this measure is not only just, but absolutely necessary, to prevent its becoming a dead-weight—a more than mill-stone round our necks.

A reef of coral rock, united with the madreporé already mentioned, runs round the island a short distance from the shore. Through it, however, are several passages for boats, and even ships. The windward harbour of Port South-East, Port Bourbon, or Grand Port, appears large, though really much contracted by shoals, which lie under water, and prove dangerous to shipping, as in the instance of our frigates. Isle de Passe partly forms, as wells as commands, the entrance, which is not, however, very spacious. This, with the wind blowing almost always directly in, renders the egress of shipping, at all times, difficult, and in the face of an enemy impossible. From the same cause, added to the distance from the capital, merchant-vessels rarely put in, except from necessity.

Port North-West, or Port Louis, is placed on the opposite side of the island, directly to leeward of the former. It is a narrow inlet of the sea, something more than a mile long, about five hundred yards broad, compact, and as safe as the occasional visitation of hurricanes will permit any place here to be. A reef runs off from its mouth, marked by buoys; but, on account of the wind blowing continually out, vessels anchor near them under the guns of Tonnelier Island, and warp in by manual labour. The disadvantages of this situation are, however, amply compensated by the facility with which they in return proceed to sea. It contains, besides, the naval arsenal, gives name to the only town in the island, and is sufficiently capacious for any demands likely to be made upon it by the commerce of this region. During the fine season, a dozen men-of-war, and fifty sail of merchant-ships, may ride in perfect security.

With regard to trade, it is not likely that Mauritius will ever be of much value to England. Her sugar and coffee we do not want; and were they ever so great, or good, or cheap, no English politician would, for a moment, allow them to come into the market in competition with the produce of the West-India islands. Neither is the consumption of English manufactures likely to be considerable, because cheaper articles than we can afford may be procured from other quarters. Commercial men here seem in general deficient in capital; they appear neither to understand the value, nor will give a price for English goods; so that a variety of articles, brought from

the Cape of Good Hope, lie on hand, without any other spot in the vicinity in which to find a market, except it be the Portuguese settlement of Mosambique.

Mauritius, January, 1811.

To enter on a few further particulars relative to Port Louis: the theatre is a large wooden structure, painted so well to imitate stone, that, at a short distance, the deception is complete. The situation is pleasant as well as public, being in an open square. The approach has some trees and green sod, so that, on a grand occasion, by a little skill, a *fête champêtre* without might be added to the performances within. The interior is very well decorated; the scenery, dresses, and performers also, I am told, receive every applause from the audience. The boxes have neither lobby nor division one from another, and, consequently, possess only two side-doors for the whole—an arrangement militating against our English ideas of convenience. Four handsome stage-boxes, however, receive the principal civil and military authorities.

The Lyceum, in which two or three hundred boys were formerly educated, is the largest building in the town. The exterior is showy; but within it is little more than a shell, converted, by our necessities, for the present, into an hospital. Adjoining to it is the Champ de l'Or, a very imposing title, though, so far as I can discover, without any pretensions to it—remarkable only for the ruins of an aqueduct, environed by some pretty scenery.

The barracks contain good accommodations for a regiment of infantry, inclosing a square for regimental parades. The artillery have other quarters; Grand Port and Grand River, likewise, retain regiments in the present distribution of the British military force.

In passing through the right extremity of the town, or Malabar district, the eye is amused by an infinite medley of complexions; but straight hair predominates. The European, Malay, Mulatto, and even Negro, are blended with the Indian;—it seems a vast manufactory of animal life—a kind of human chemical laboratory, where Nature tries her hand in forming an amalgam out of many of the different races of mankind. A great number of pretty girls of colour, mistresses to the whites, reside here. Malabar Street leads to a long defenceless ditch, termed the lines—to Pamplemause—to Flacq—to Mon Plaisir, the residence of the Commander-in-Chief of the troops, and to the public garden adjoining. In the latter are found many of the rare trees, shrubs, plants, and other vegetable treasures of the East, as well as of the South Seas, brought hither with

some expense and trouble by the circumnavigators. Several of these productions, though they annually vegetate, never arrive at any thing like the perfection attained in their native clime.

The market, or bazar, is held in Champ de Mars-street, and crowded every morning at day-light by the many-coloured retailers of garden produce. Flesh-meat, with the exception of pork, is not plentiful; the skinny substance sold for mutton, has neither taste nor flavour; the beef is better; but a noble surloin from Leadenhall-market, or a tempting leg of Southdown, would be objects of no less wonder than value among the natives as well as to ourselves.—Fruits, along with the culinary tribe, are brought in from the plantations the evening before, packed in baskets carried by slaves; at day-light the market opens, and an hour after this time scarcely any thing can be procured. Pines, guavas, bannanas, mangoes, and a few others, form the best of the fruits at present; the former delicious article is purchased for the moderate sum of two-pence.

Between the rear of the town and the hills, lies the Champ or Field of Mars, a level, green plain, about a mile in circumference. Besides being the scene of military evolutions, it was a favourite promenade for the fair sex previously to our arrival, but at present is deserted by them.

On the 4th of January, 1811, Governor Farquhar gave a grand ball and supper to the principal inhabitants and strangers on the island. This was a sort of conciliatory introduction to the better acquaintance of both,—a kind of face-to-face meeting, where they might survey each other in person, and not through the medium of jaundiced report. It was, besides, attacking the French in their own way, for without a ball,—without a spectacle,—*mon Dieu!* what a dull set of people would these Englishmen have been thought. I would not of course omit so fine an opportunity of seeing the whole group, particularly the fair sex, collectively. They alone direct the laws of polished society, give amenity to manners, interest to conversation, and to

“ — the body of the time
Its form and pressure.”

More than a hundred paraded the rooms, displaying many good figures and interesting features; the eye of enquiry is on such occasions always particularly keen; and it implies no little merit when the general expectation of inquisitive beaux is not disappointed. Their dress was in general shewy, but not so the complexion, for *rouge*, the once inseparable companion of a French-woman, seemed here to be utterly discarded. Altogether they differed little in appearance from our fair country-

women, half a dozen of whom were in the rooms, and who looked so well that —— but no; I will not make comparisons where our new friends, notwithstanding the charm of novelty, may lose so much.

After the French country-dances and waltzes we mustered an English country-dance, to the great amusement of those of the natives who had never before witnessed any thing of the kind. Several of the younger classes laughed outright; the seniors smiled; and a few of both who joined us seemed speedily fatigued by our quick and agile motions, or “jumping,” as a lively girl termed it, so contrary to their own slower movements; but there were nevertheless many candidates for the English party.

If the ladies were satisfied with the fire-works and dancing, the men were not less so with the more substantial part of the evening's entertainment. In the usual style of the reporter upon a fashionable party, in a fashionable morning paper, I might say—“The supper-tables displayed every delicacy of the season, uniting the utmost elegance with the greatest profusion, and both rendered more charmingly attractive by the fascinating attentions of the amiable host and hostess, combined with the elegant hilarity of their guests.”—In plain language, we had every attention, and a superabundance of good things. Let me put you on your guard, however, against crediting that Frenchmen admire only *soup maigre*; no such thing, believe me; for I never saw a party of hungry Britons do more determined justice to the most substantial fare than the good people of Mauritius.

The morning after the ball, the good-humour of our French friends was almost in danger of being destroyed by the capture of a small prize. Her approach being early discovered, the forts and shipping hoisted the tri-coloured flag for deception; boats were likewise sent out to secure the stranger, which was done off the harbour's mouth before the cheat was discovered. She proved to be a small schooner from France, with dispatches for General de Caen.

The harbour, which I partly sketched on a former occasion, is defended on the right by Tonnelier (or Cooper's) Island, a small spot, connected with the main by an artificial isthmus about 300 yards long, running through a shallow arm of the port, termed De Caen's bay. This Isle forms an effectual defence as well from enemies as from the elements; on the sea face it is entirely covered by works of sand and mud, lined with heavy guns, with several mortars, and furnaces for hot shot; the principal work, lately called Imperial, is now named Abercrombie battery. To the left of the entrance is Fort Blanc, not so strong,

but more difficult of access from the sea than *Tonnelier*. These, along with the minor works, added to the wind and shoals, render an attack from shipping quite impracticable; they are, however, open to the rear, and commanded by smaller batteries nearer the town; so that were an enemy to carry the sea-line by a coup de main, he must either advance and secure the others in succession, or submit to be driven out by the fire in his rear.

At the head, and a little to the right of the harbour, is a basin communicating with it, named *Trou Fanfaron*, (Braggart's Hole) where ships are careened and refitted; but the small rise of the tide must always prevent the formation of docks. Across the entrance to this recess formerly existed a reef of rocks, which became the first care of la Bourdonnais to remove; it has, however, been so much improved since that time, that vessels drawing sixteen feet may now enter in safety. But, like the harbour altogether, it is liable to fill with mud driven down by the rains in the hurricane months; myriads of white ants likewise infest it, whose ravages and numbers in the bottoms of uncoppered vessels are truly astonishing. From the ineffectual attempts made to prevent the accumulation of mud, machines are kept for cleansing *Trou Fanfaron*, as well as the harbour; boats likewise carry the dirt on shore from the shipping, a penalty being levied for any thrown overboard. A small peninsula, projecting between the head of the harbour and this recess, is happily adapted by nature for a naval arsenal; accordingly, we find store-houses here for sails, rigging, cordage, and other supplies for shipping, and at the doors of which boats may disembark their lading, during the necessary repairs of the squadron; so far art has not been wanting to improve the advantages offered by local position.

Attached to this establishment is a good hospital, capable of containing 300 patients; the situation is convenient, but perhaps too confined to be altogether favourable to health. The interior, however, is very well arranged, the wards perfectly ventilated; and the flat roof, commanding a fine view of the adjoining coast and country, as well as being exposed to the breeze, forms a pleasant walk for the convalescents. Connected with the hospital was an institution of young ladies, under the care of matrons, who superintended some of its exterior concerns,—for the alleviation of human suffering is ever peculiarly grateful to the kinder feelings of the sex.

To the left of the harbour appears a small tower or look-out house, intended for the use of the pilots. Signals announcing the approach of vessels from sea, are made from two hills named *Discovery*; that on the left is the principal; they communicate with others placed at various distances round the island, by

which means intelligence of the proceedings of our cruisers was speedily communicated to Port Louis. Intimation was likewise given to French ships arriving off the coast, of the positions of the blockading squadron, so that in case of danger they could again stand off to sea till a more favourable moment arrived, or otherwise enter the port unmolested. During the night, rockets were sometimes thrown up for the same purpose, when either of the harbours seemed more particularly watched.

I have been a good deal amused by hearing several marvellous stories, related as facts, of the great distance at which ships have been occasionally distinguished from the hills. This faculty of far-seeing, or rather divination, is confined to a few : it appears something like the second-sight of Scotland, but whether true or false, one of the persons thus gifted is said to have received a pension some years ago for his talent. This man communicated to government, that he had distinctly observed, from the island, the shipwreck of a vessel in one of the ports of Madagascar, which had been sent thither for supplies ; though laughed at, he persisted in his story, mentioned the day, the hour, and the precise scene of her distress, all which being duly registered, turned out afterwards to be correct ; the distance is *only* about 400 miles. On another occasion, a young lady, who anxiously expected her lover from sea, applied to one of these wonderful persons to discover whether the dear object of her regard was within reach of his comprehensive eye. The far-seeing man replied, after due examination, that he was then not more than *three days' sail* from the island, and had been employed on deck at the moment he distinguished him, in the homely office of purifying his linen ; this, to the great credit of his optics, likewise proved true. Many other stories of a similar description are told, and by many believed ; these samples, however, are quite enough for moderate credulity ; but a delicate appetite for the marvellous, will find some difficulty in digesting them.

But without attending to improbable tales, I am told, from creditable authority, that vessels have been distinguished so far as ninety miles distant, as was ascertained afterwards by comparing dates with their subsequent run toward the land. Even this is an extraordinary circumstance, considering that all the mountains are of very moderate height. From the peak of Teneriffe, or Mount *Ætna*, it would not, perhaps, be strange ; for their vast elevation enables the eye to embrace an almost unbounded range, particularly at the period of sun-rise, when land, as well as minuter objects, have been frequently distinguished without difficulty at that distance. Here it may perhaps be accounted

for by the clearness of the atmosphere, reflecting objects from the surface of a smooth sea to the sky, whence they become visible to those who possess acute visual organs.

Rambling lately through the main street, I discovered a pleasant retreat from the noon-day sun in the baths, of which there are a dozen or more in one of the houses. You cannot conceive a greater luxury in such a climate. The mind, the frame, the *vis vitæ* altogether, jaded and almost exhausted by the effects of a scorching sun, become at once reanimated by immersion, to vigour, freshness, and cleanliness. This refreshing luxury is enjoyed for the moderate sum of half-a-dollar, the cheapest thing I have yet discovered in Port Louis.

The library, within a few paces of the exchange, contains, as the proprietor informed me, nearly 60,000 volumes, always open to subscribers. It was first formed by several hands, but is now become the property of one, a M. Barron. The selection of French authors embraces the most popular in the language; the English works are few, poor in merit, and evidently brought together by accident. I saw Locke, it is true, on a conspicuous shelf, but supported on one side by the "Farrier's Guide," and "The Drill Serjeant;" and on the other by the "Complete Cook," and a wretched novel. Almost grieved so see an old friend in such company, I had him removed to a convenient place, by the side of Bacon.

Mauritius, February.

We have been latterly much confined to the ship, by a series of unfavourable weather. This, indeed, is the season (February) for those tremendous discharges of wind from the heavens termed hurricanes, which for a time overwhelm the whole face of nature in a general ruin, and seem but the prelude to its final dissolution. At first it was intended we should visit the settlement at Madagascar; two brigs of war, however, having been sent thither, the *Nisus* remains for the protection of the island. She is, therefore, moored near the head of the harbour, by means of eight enormous chains and cables, keeping five more in readiness to use if necessary. The sky is generally gloomy, the elements threatening, and heavy falls of rain, accompanied by violent gusts of wind, continually occur, so that we are in hourly expectation of being visited by the tempest. The hurricane months, or rainy season, commence about the middle of December, though in the present year they are later than usual, and continue till April. During the greater part of this time the hills are obscured by clouds, or by a thick vapour, which is commonly in motion; the heat likewise is close and uncomfortable; thunder and lightning very frequent, the

wind and rain considerable, and to these may be added the occasional scourge of a hurricane. The latter never occurs with any regularity: very rarely, however, more than five years elapse between its visitations; neither are these always equal in violence. The last of material consequence occurred three years ago, and committed considerable devastation; the Harrier sloop of war, returning to the Cape from off this island, foundered with every soul on-board. In 1806 there was another. The fate of the Blenheim 74, and Java 38, returning from India in 1805, with Sir Thomas Trowbridge on-board, is supposed to have been similar, and to have occurred near this place. A man in the pilot's department, indeed, has informed me, he saw a large ship in distress, supposed to be the former vessel, pass the island the day before a hurricane came on in April, 1805; and it is well known that she was in a rotten state previously to her leaving India.

The approach of this awful phenomenon, the best informed persons here say, cannot be always distinguished; but the occasional prognostics are, a considerable swell of the sea near the entrance to the harbour; the screams and confused flight of sea-birds; dense clouds, often copper-coloured, on the mountains; a fresh breeze from south-west, with sudden intervals of calm; and a species of wildness in the horizon, better to be conceived than described. Signs of this kind sometimes appear without being followed by the storm; at others, they do not precede it; but, in either case, the utmost dependance is placed on the barometer, which, on the approach of a hurricane, commonly takes a considerable and rapid descent. Without the concurrence of this useful instrument, therefore, there is not much cause for serious alarm. The tempest commences with violent gusts of wind, returning at irregular intervals, between which are momentary calms, resembling the frightful pauses of an earthquake. These continue to increase in violence and frequency, the sea and sky seeming in equal and terrible commotion. The struggles become more awful by continuance; half nature stands aghast at the fury of the other portion. The heavens, as it were, seem at war with the land, for both display the wildest disorder and alarm. After a time the wind shifts to another point, collecting greater strength, if possible, by change of position; here its fury likewise rages, and in turn evaporates, changing again to another point, and, running in this manner gradually round the compass, terminates in about twenty hours by a plentiful discharge of rain. The gusts, or shocks, if I may so term them, vary in violence: they come from the southward and westward more than from other points, and seem particularly strong in the mornings.

During the height of its violence, the force of the wind is almost incredible. Anecdotes are related here, which, were they not matter of public notoriety, could be with difficulty believed. In the harbour, the topmasts of large ships have been sometimes blown off like twigs. The Abbé Rouchon relates an instance of the lower masts of a sixty-four-gun ship being fairly twisted out of the vessel. Ships have been often carried out of the harbour, distressed, and sometimes lost; and others driven on-shore, notwithstanding every precaution of providing good anchors and cables; for the ground, being principally mud, becomes so much disturbed by the general commotion, that the former will not hold. The confusion then becomes distressing: vessels beating their bottoms out on the rocks; broken masts and yards driving to and fro; sails and rigging scattered at the mercy of the wind; guns of distress; the cries of the sufferers, intermixed with the howl of the storm, altogether form a most vivid picture of distress. Bound as we now are, with chains little less than adamant, it is not very satisfactory to hear that our precautions will be of little avail should the tempest come on.

Badly situated as we are afloat, the people on-shore seem little better. Chaos appears as if returned; houses, bridges, gardens, roads, trees, and whole plantations, are seriously injured, or totally destroyed; for what the tempest spares is often overflowed by torrents. The face of the country exhibits numberless traces of fruitless toil and ruined industry;* neither the slave's hut nor the planter's mansion escapes. The brute creation instinctively seek shelter on the approach of the storm; even man is not safe amid this war of elements, for few can venture into the more exposed places without danger. A respectable inhabitant tells me, that being once caught on the road in a hurricane, he was obliged to cling to the stump of a tree for support; but, quitting his hold, was driven impetuously forward more than two hundred yards, and near to a rapid torrent, which might have been fatal to him, before he regained sufficient recollection to secure his safety by throwing himself prostrate. The fate of the signal-post is still told here with surprise. Discovery Mountain, to the left of the town, elevated about twelve hundred feet above the level of the sea, contained some time ago, as it does now, a station for the performance of that duty, besides a house appropriated for the re-

* In the succeeding season (1812,) some houses and bridges were washed away, or otherwise destroyed. A part of Pieter Batte mountain likewise fell. Rice rose from five to twelve dollars per bag, besides other provisions in proportion.

sidence of the people who attended it. During the night of a hurricane, many years ago, the house and signal-post, along with the men, disappeared, not leaving a vestige behind to judge of their probable fate; many think they were carried into the sea, though at least a mile distant. In town, people are more secure in their persons and property than in the country; yet the distress even there was formerly considerable. The horrors of famine were likewise added, in the early days of the settlement, to their other sufferings; but the present state of the island forbids any fears of that kind.

Hurricanes also extend to Bourbon; but their devastations there are seldom so great, probably from its being more out of their track, or from the greater height of the hills giving more protection to the vallies. A very severe one, however, was experienced about ten years ago, from the effects of which some of the coffee and cotton grounds have scarcely recovered. It seems a singular fact, not well explained, so far as I know, by philosophers, that this scourge is principally confined to the verge of the Tropics. Near the Equator, as well as in temperate latitudes, it is almost unknown; still farther north or south, steady and more frequent gales perform the office of the hurricane, whatever it be, with moderation. It seems a confined vein of wind, seldom extending to any distance, bursting from the heavens with impetuous fury, and becoming soon exhausted by its own violence; while, beyond the immediate sphere of its operation, Nature retains her usual tranquillity. Several of the West-India Islands, lying in nearly the same parallels of latitude as Mauritius, Bourbon, and Rodriguez, are sometimes, though more rarely, subject to similar visitations. The Siphon of the Indian and Chinese Seas, the hurricane of the East and West Indies, the Tornado of the Coast of Africa, all claim kindred; they are merely varieties of the same event,—bursts of ungovernable fury from Nature, which as they terminate by rain, she may be said, like other females, to finish her tempest of passion by tears.

It is remarked here, as a very singular circumstance, that in the Seychelle Islands, a dependancy of Mauritius, within four degrees of the Equator, discovered and settled about sixty years ago, the oldest inhabitant does not recollect a hurricane, or even a moderate gale of wind. The climate there is said to be fine, the earth fruitful, the sea equally bountiful, and the people, few in number, living in a state of patriarchal simplicity. The English squadron usually took refuge at these islands in the hurricane months, they being unprotected; and wood, water, turtle, fruits, and other refreshments were procured for the crews. In return, a small vessel was permitted

to come to this island, or to Bourbon, for the supply of the immediate necessities of the people.

The natural curiosities of Mauritius are very few; among these are two irregular patches of fresh-water of some extent, said to be thirty or forty fathoms in depth, situated in the district of William's Plains, about fourteen miles from town, and seven or eight inland from Port Jecotet. They contain eels, sometimes reported to be caught nearly fifteen feet long, besides some other fish. The shores present appearances of lava, so that it is believed they are the mouths of ancient volcanoes. There are likewise several caverns of considerable size, but not otherwise remarkable; and a cascade in Tamarin River.

Maroons, or run-away slaves, impelled by hunger or desperation, formerly interrupted travellers in the interior, but they disappeared as the country became better peopled; and at present there are not twenty of these wretched creatures in existence. They lived in woods and among rocks, burrowing in holes and crannies in the earth, often hunted like beasts of prey, and dreading the face of every human being. Such a state appears almost more dreadful than slavery itself, yet it was often embraced in preference; so loved, so dear to every human heart, is the consciousness of freedom, even in its most hazardous and forbidding forms.

In making the tour of the coast, proceeding from Port Louis to leeward, the distance to Black River is about twenty-one miles, thence to Cape Brabant eight, and from that to Port Souillac sixteen. Grand Port is nineteen miles further, thence to Flacq sixteen, and from the latter to Port Louis again about twenty; but taking the extreme outline of the coast, these distances are increased. The direct road across the island between Port Louis and Grand Port, the two principal places, is twenty-six miles; from the former to Flacq about fifteen.

The roads are pretty numerous, but in many places so thickly wedged with projecting stones, as to be nearly impassable to a delicate-wheeled vehicle, and even difficult to the feet of horses. Asses therefore form the general medium of conveyance. The central portion of the island is not only uncultivated, but remains covered by the original woods; this space comprises about eight or ten miles in length by half that breadth, containing only a few scattered habitations. The principal plantations are near the coast, for the greater convenience of carriage to the town, by which indeed their value is in some degree estimated. The most productive districts are about Mocha, William's Plains, Black River, Grand Port, Flacq, and Pamplemousse.

An alarm having been given, by signals, of an enemy being

off the island, we quitted the harbour, and, not without difficulty, our staunch friends the mooring-chains, at a moment's notice. The chace, after about an hour's pursuit, displayed Arab colours. Our expectations were now wrought to the highest pitch, a rich Arab ship having been taken by one of the brigs of war only a few days before. Finding it hopeless to attempt to escape, the stranger hove-to. But alas! the golden vision was only momentary; the ship was from Bengal, and being alarmed by the usual *ruse* of shewing French colours, had set off in affright for Bourbon. Fully convinced however that the frigate was French, the master and crew had put all their wealth in their pockets, and as much apparel as they could carry on their backs, preparatory to a tedious confinement in the prison ships of Port Louis.

At Sea, March.

I was not sorry at quitting the harbour for a short time. The rain had very often interrupted the enjoyment of either exercise or curiosity; and the effects of the moisture in the streets rendered walking unpleasant, even when the day was dry. On-board we were scarcely more comfortable; for, in excluding the showers, we were likewise obliged to shut out a large portion of air. This, added to the close atmosphere of a ship, and external moisture, produced an oppressive sultriness that was not merely heat, but the heavy, thick, overpowering sense of being steamed.

But even this formed only a small portion of our annoyances. The land of Egypt was scarcely more cursed with every species of vermin than our ship. At all seasons, at all hours, and in all places, they attacked us in every possible manner. Rats, mice, mosquitoes, locusts, flies, bugs, moths, cockroaches, fleas, scorpions, centipedes, and others, infest the shipping more than the shore, for, having numberless places of concealment in the holds, in the interstices of the beams and timbers, and in the provision-casks, it becomes quite impossible to eject the enemy after his having once made good a lodgement. Besides being pestered in the day, we have been frightened in our beds by the prowling of rats, blistered by mosquitoes, bitten by fleas, driven out of bed by bugs, and in danger of being fairly carried off by thousands of cockroaches. The latter, I need not tell you, somewhat resembles your *beetle*; but here they are considerably larger; they fly about confusedly in the night, continually dart on our faces, sometimes extinguish the candles, and lay eggs in which the young in embryo present the same appearance and numbers as the roes of herrings. My cabin is frequently covered by clouds of these creatures, which give it

the semblance of being daubed with animated brown varnish; and my only remedy is a furious assault, right and left, with a weighty towel, which stuns a few of the enemy, and drives the remainder to their covert abodes. Even your familiar acquaintances, flies, acquire here a vigour in their assaults, unknown in Europe. Through the thick covering of a cotton-stocking, I have more than once felt wounds that made me start from my chair. The whole insect and reptile tribes seemed armed against us; raw Europeans make a delicate food, as well as a species of fair game to all of them. Our juices form a perfect living larder to every thing that can either bite or puncture: and I almost look forward with pleasure to the time when I shall be so seasoned, or sun-dried, as to be no longer an article of luxury. They are first introduced on-board, in the various packages of provisions and stores; neither is it possible for any vigilance to exclude them. Thanks, however, to the cooler air of the sea, many have retired to their fastnesses, to be again drawn forth by the quiescence and warmth of the harbour.

It is said that the Dutch quitted this island in consequence of the numbers and ravages of locusts and rats. The former destroyed the productions of the earth; the latter seemed to have a similar design upon the cultivators, being large and bold, not even sparing, according to traditional accounts, the sacred form of man. To ships they are a great nuisance, destroying not only stores and provisions, but, urged by the continual noise of the water, will sometimes eat their way through the timbers, thus causing leaks, which it is supposed have proved fatal to many vessels. It is remarkable, that they always swim off to shipping when the distance is not considerable, and ascend by means of the cables; in case of a rope being made fast to the shore, they may be distinguished in the night, crawling off in numbers.* Our other foes, not content with assailing our skin, prove also, as many a poor sailor can testify, inveterate enemies to a wardrobe.

The sea is without doubt the healthiest place in a tropical climate. The breeze, pure, fresh, and invigorating, untainted by pestiferous effluvia, and uninterrupted by obstructions, revives the drooping frame from the effects of heat or laborious avocations. The degree of exhaustion always operating on-shore

* Two years after this (in 1813) these animals had so much increased that they ran about the lower deck almost without dread. It likewise became an amusement among the boys to fish for them down the hatchways with hook and line; during the first few days, the bait was no sooner down than it was eagerly seized, and many were thus caught. But several escaping after feeling the hook, seemed to give the alarm, for they became more cautious, though their numbers and boldness otherwise were surprising.

is considerable; business, exercise, and pleasure, all tend to it; dissipation, however, is its great source; yet such a creature is man, that, though forewarned by the strongest cautions, and fortified in his own mind by the best resolutions, the very atmosphere of hospitality and gaiety brushes them from his memory. The most determined of us are guilty of occasional backslidings in this way. Let no man, on entering the tropics, say, *in this precise manner will I live, and in no other.*

It has often surprised me that, considering the number of invalids in warm climates, so few should try the simple remedy of a voyage. The air, the motion, the moderate exercise afforded by the decks, all are favourable to the experiment of regaining health. In a ship of war is further added—society, strict temperance, and a regularity of living, that admits of no interruption from temptations of any kind. But she had so many and various duties, and so little accommodation for strangers, that we can seldom admit the wan and irritable subject of lingering disease into our insulated community. In merchant-vessels, however, those who have been enabled to make the trial, have generally found it advantageous.

During a dark tempestuous morning, when the waves broke furiously over the rocks near Fort Blanc, and occasional gleams of sun-shine only served to make the gloom more discernible, the signal-post announced the approach of two English vessels. One gained a secure anchorage near us. The other, less fortunate, being entrusted to an ignorant pilot, approached the mouth of the harbour unsteadily, while, from the ship, we anxiously observed her verging towards the rocks. Aware, however, that she had a pilot, and having no means of communicating our apprehensions before she would be either out of danger, or involved in it, we gazed in trembling suspense, hoping, yet scarcely expecting, her deliverance. Persisting in trying to enter the harbour, instead of anchoring without, to await a more favourable moment, some unskilful manœuvres left the chance of escape wholly to miracle; the vessel soon became encircled by the swell of the sea beating on the reef; toward this dreaded point the wind, likewise, irresistibly urged her. The recollection of the people on-board seemed to return just time enough to let go two anchors in the surf, which, for a moment, seemed to suspend her fate. It was, however, but for a moment; both cables parted at the instant one of our boats had approached to her assistance, and an overwhelming surge carried the ill-fated vessel on the rocks.

An involuntary exclamation of terror burst from the spectators, several hundreds of whom had, by this time, assembled on-shore, as well as in the different ships. Our feelings were strongly

excited; the vessel was in the mouth of the harbour, about musket-shot from us, and not more than three hundred yards from the land; yet so environed by surf and rocks, that a boat dared not approach, without certain death to all who should make the attempt. For a few minutes she continued beating on the reef, rocking to and fro in the wildest agitation. A tremendous surge, that seemed some time in collecting, at length struck her on the side; she rolled over toward the shore, to all appearance overwhelmed, so as never to rise again. Recovering slowly, however, from the shock to an erect position, she was again immediately struck down by the tremendous crash of waters; this was momentarily repeated, to our great terror; it was the struggle of weakness with more than Herculean strength—and it seemed astonishing to us all how the quivering timbers, thus assaulted, could hold together. In the intervals of each surge, which continually broke over her, we observed the people cutting away the masts, a previous attempt, to force her over the reef with the foresail, having proved unsuccessful. To add to the general distress of the spectators, it was ascertained, by the return of our boat, that a lady shared in the awful situation of the crew. Our feelings did not require this additional excitement; the effect, however, was visible in every countenance; every person became more anxious and more interested. It is one of the best traits of our nature to feel, acutely, for female sufferings—a small tribute of gratitude due to the tenderness and affection of the sex;—may this feeling ever warmly pervade the bosom of man, in every variety of his being—in the hours of tranquillity, of levity, of danger, of worldly selfishness!

Several strangers, interested for the fate of their friends, expected from the Cape of Good Hope, had now joined our group on the quarter-deck of the *Nisus*, to gain the earliest information from the wreck. A few expected even dearer connections than mere friends; anxiety was wound to the highest pitch; every glass in the ship was in requisition—every eye strained to trace some feature of the fair unfortunate. Some fancied they could distinguish her absorbed in grief, some in the wild attitudes of despair, some in calm resignation to a fate that seemed inevitable. These varying opinions increased the general impatience for more certain information. A man was now observed to descend the wreck of the foremast, which had, fortunately, fallen toward the shore, with the apparent intention of committing himself to the mercy of the waves. He paused, however, and returned; he descended a second time, and again hesitated; at length he precipitated himself into the water, and was so long buried under an overwhelming sea, that we began

to conclude him lost. For a second, we again distinguished his head, and again he was carried down by another surge; the boats, in the mean time, had approached as near as they safely could, till meeting the poor fellow, whirled he knew not whither, he was taken up nearly inanimate, though fortunately unhurt by the rocks.

A second, some time after, followed this example with equal success; the others seem determined to share the fate of the vessel. The lady was said to be occasionally visible on the fore-castle, where the crew had now taken refuge from the continual breaking of the sea. By this time the wind having slightly abated, and a boat of a superior description being procured, an officer of the navy, along with some other gallant sailors, masters of merchant-vessels, volunteered to attempt her deliverance. I need not say how our feelings beat in unison with their efforts. By equal good fortune and exertions, they reached the vessel in an interval of the surge, received their charge, who was in readiness, and in a few minutes were hurled furiously on-shore, on the foaming summits of the surf, to the infinite joy of us all. The scene that took place here was not less interesting. The fair sufferer proved to be the wife of an officer in one of the regiments employed on the expedition, and had followed her husband hither from the Cape of Good Hope. He, like many others, actuated by curiosity, had strolled toward the beach, where the first object that met his eyes was his wife, weak and fainting, just delivered from a watery grave. I leave the scene that ensued to your imagination;—conjugal feelings, in such a case, can only be conceived, or described, by the initiated.

There was so much of the romantic in this incident, as to have rendered it, for some time, the general subject of conversation. In the dearth of invention, complained of by the critics, it might almost form an episode for a new novel. St. Pierre has immortalized one shipwreck here; some English writer, of brilliant imagination, may celebrate another; but, happily, our second Virginia, by the help of some British seamen, has been more fortunate than her predecessor. Two men perished in the vessel, which was totally lost; the others, after being eight hours exposed to the rage of the elements, were landed in safety. The pilot has been committed to prison.

Mauritius, March.

Our late trip to sea prevented my joining a party to the summit of the *Pouce*, a mountain so called in the vicinity of the town. In fine weather, this forms a favourite excursion of the ladies, who, notwithstanding its steepness, scramble up with no

little dexterity. From the top, the prospect is extensive and variegated, commanding the sea, the coasts, the plains, plantations, woods, Paul and Virginia's valley near Long Mountain, a village or two, and some pretty scenery, for which several districts of the island are remarkable. St. Pierre's descriptions, therefore, are not always overcharged;—the groves, hills, and vallies, may be occasionally traced amid a few—and not more than a few—excuseable exaggerations.

Perhaps some of the most romantic scenes exist near Black River, where a trifling degree of art is added to embellish nature. Several small rivulets wildly meander through the deep recesses of groves, inviting, from their shade, beauty and privacy. The branches being interwoven at the top, and denying access to the sun, the streams become, consequently, cool, as well as limpid; in the hottest part of the day, all the charms of a tropical climate may be enjoyed here without its heat. The voluptuary in natural beauties may enjoy a more than ordinary feast—the naturalist examine and collect—the contemplative philosopher ponder—and the lover worship the idol of his heart, with a purity worthy of the spot;—for the Queen of Love could not chuse a scene better adapted to the chaste rites of her votaries. Here, likewise, it is customary for the Dianas of the vicinity to bathe, without danger of being observed by prying Actæons; and hither steals the timid and panting stag to allay his thirst, and seek temporary concealment. Among other places, Flacq is particularly distinguished for pretty scenery, gardens, and pleasant habitations.

At certain seasons, some of the slaves and people of colour here have festivals and processions, accompanied by uncouth music, shouting, and screaming; they are, likewise, bedaubed with paint of various colours, and fantastically attired. The object of these rejoicings is a figure strangely dressed, paraded through the streets, seated in a chair, or under a canopy; he is the representative of the good spirit. Their evil-genius, or devil, is, with great truth, painted white. The price of a male slave, when first imported, averages about 150 dollars; if they acquire any of the mechanic arts, the value is more than doubled; but the men employed this way are commonly born in the island, and when let out in their various occupations, earn considerable sums of money. Others receive a canoe and nets, and prove expert fishermen. Their principal diet is the manioc, with some rice, sago, and sugar-cane; for this latter, being a favourite, may almost be termed an article of food: tobacco is esteemed by them no small luxury.

The climate of Mauritius is fine, the air, in general, salubrious, even during the hurricane months; and the winds would seem to carry off the usual noxious exhalations from excessive

rains within the tropics. The heat is seldom productive of the *Coup de Soleil*. In December, the thermometer, in the hottest part of the day, placed in the shade, and exposed to a free current of air, stood at 79°, 80°, 81°. Barometer, between 28.5 and 30; winds light from S.E. to E.S.E. with frequent calms. January raised the thermometer two and three degrees; winds strong from N.E. to N.W. The latter, during the whole of February, were very variable, though violent, and attended, as in the preceding month, by heavy falls of rain. At present the winds are again from eastward; April becomes cooler; and the remaining months, till November, may be considered pleasant. On-shore, the thermometer was three or four degrees higher than with us, few of the houses enjoying the breeze that prevails in the harbour.

From the general healthiness of the Island; it may become, perhaps, a resort for the invalids of India, or, at least, a resting-place on the way to Europe. It is, indeed, reported, that some cargoes of incurables are on their way hither; but the temperature is too considerable to benefit the emaciated frame, smarting under the effects of diseased liver. Notwithstanding the general salubrity, Mauritius furnishes no particular instances of longevity. Bourbon is said to possess this envied distinction in a much greater degree. The little island of Rodriguez, three hundred miles to windward of Mauritius, is likewise healthy; either are better calculated for an exhausted European, than Indian, constitution.

But the eastern coast of Madagascar, something more than the same distance to leeward, is stamped with the features of death; the very air is poisonous, and the soil little less than deadly. A stranger, who visits the settlements there in the rainy season, to reside on-shore, is almost certain of being cut off. In all the detested spots that conspire against human life—and America has her West-Indies and Guiana, Africa her Gambia and Senegal, Asia her Java and Banda, and parts of Europe are yet scourged by the plague—the best preservative is to keep embarked. Here we may often bid defiance to the grim fiend—Death, and his ruthless agents, marsh and animal effluvia. Vessels that frequent Madagascar, even in the worst periods, by occasionally changing their situation, anchoring as far as circumstances will admit from the shore, and constantly sleeping on-board, return without loss. Others, that are less careful, sometimes lose half their crews.

On the 19th of March, about noon, we experienced a tremendous storm, exceeding, in violence, any I recollect to have felt during my naval career. During the evening and night, it increased so much in violence, that every rag of canvas was obliged to be taken in, to prevent being blown away. Day-

light, next morning, found us lying-to under bare poles, the ship rolling violently, the sea breaking, occasionally, over the weather gang-way, the hatches battened down, and the wind, in gusts, bursting upon us with incredible fury. About seven o'clock it seemed to have attained the acmé of its violence. Harassed, rather than refreshed, by interrupted repose, from the indescribable agitation of the vessel, added to a sensation of being steamed by exhalations of heat and moisture, owing to the exclusion of air from the hatchways, I hurried on-deck to gain a mouthful of fresh air, supporting myself by clinging to the ropes of the weather bulwark.

Here the scene, to any unwearied landman, would have been truly awful. With us, I almost blush to say, it excited only jest and laughter, at the ludicrous mishaps to which we were occasionally subject from the spray of the sea, and the violence of the motion. The direction of the surges was irregular; the masts were expected to go every moment; the wind howled through the rigging with a furious, yet melancholy, tone; the ship sometimes plunged as if she were darting headlong into the abyss of waters, never again to ascend, or jerked suddenly to leeward, leaving us hanging by the ropes, without any support from our legs;—we could only be passive, though suffering, spectators of this fearful war of elements.

The storm, at its commencement, blew from the eastward, afterwards from the S.S.E. then from the westward, and when, about midnight, on the 20th, it had materially abated in violence, settled at north. The swell, though considerable, was not so heavy as was expected, owing to the frequent shifting of the wind. Occasionally it rained; but the decks were continually covered with water, by the white tops of the sea being blown on-board the sheets. The barometer fell considerably on the approach of the storm; I believe, for I do not immediately recollect, so low as 27. The ship has escaped, fortunately, without injury; and, indeed, we did not dread any danger, except from the loss of the masts. A frigate is the perfection of ship-building; her compactness, equipments, number of men, guns, and stores of every description, render her fit to carry the British flag to any part of the world, amid the conflicts either of elements or enemies. It is annoyance, more than danger, that makes a storm irksome: we cannot walk, stand, or sit, nor can we scarcely lye, at least with any prospect of repose, in this wooden castle. If there be a purgatory in this world, it is in the sufferings of a gale of wind. It is quite a season of lamentation and low spirits; every person seems to have a fit of the vapours; the sea and the service receive equal and hearty execrations. The luckless wight, who, in early youth, sighed for naval glory, now pours forth a

volley of maledictions that would astonish you, on his own stupidity, the folly of his parents, the evil influence of his stars, and the privations and miseries of his mode of life, exclaiming, with bitter vehemence:—

“D—d be the man, his name for e’er accurst,
“Who pickl’d timber in salt-water first.”

But his choler abates with the breeze; his countenance brightens with the sky; the equanimity of the elements is the prelude to his own; the drenchings, agitations, exertions, and dangers of one gale, are lulled in his recollection by the hope of future fame, honour, and command, till another renews his mishaps and anathemas.

Some injury was sustained on the island by this storm. Several trees, gardens, palings, and inclosures, were destroyed, besides houses being unroofed, or carried off; several feet from their foundations. The latter circumstance, at first sight, may appear strange, but the wonder vanishes when we consider, that many detached habitations, being built of wood, on a stone-foundation, raised ten or twelve inches above the ground, do not offer the strongest resistance to the impetuous element. I have seen, in the Champ de l’Or, two or three of these habitations thus moved. Several ships, in the harbour, were driven on-shore, but without sustaining much injury. The circumstance formerly mentioned, of the water receding from the harbour, or at least the depth being diminished, was perfectly obvious, and, on the cessation of the storm, it returned; the usual depth, at the upper moorings for frigates, where the Nisus lay, is about twenty-three feet. The islanders, however, did not call this a hurricane; you may, therefore, form some idea of what the violence of that scourge may be when it does come.

We are now on the alert for India, in order to procure a cargo of specie for the use of the government of the island, an attempt at introducing paper having failed. I have no means of ascertaining, with accuracy, the sum already expended; report, however, states it at more than 200,000*l.*, including the military as well as civil services. The greater part of this has disappeared out of circulation, being either carried off to France in the cartels, or hoarded up by the people, who have no objection, however, to lend it on good security, and the moderate interest of 20 per cent. In return, we are to take to India some quantity of small copper-coin, originally intended for that country, but intercepted in our Indiamen, and put into circulation here.

Make Harbour, Seychelle Islands, April.

On the 4th of April we quitted Port Louis, and four days after had a view of the Galega or Agalega Isles, two patches

of earth, rocks, and a scanty vegetation, situated nearly half-way between Mauritius and the Seychelle group. The largest is about six miles in length; both are low, partly covered with wood, and joined by a reef of rocks covered by the sea: landing is difficult, even in the calmest weather, there being, I am told, only one spot where a boat can make the attempt, and that, likewise, is unsafe. Having other objects to attend to, we did not stop to examine them. On such insulated and obscure spots, scarcely large enough to be noticed in the boundless extent of ocean, the existence of a human being would be little suspected. Yet, even these solitary fragments of land afforded refuge to some whites and negroes from Mauritius, employed in preparing cocoa-nut oil, and taking turtle for that island; they were discovered here more than twelve months ago, very unexpectedly, by one of our cruisers, in searching for water. I know not whether they remain, but no traces of inhabitants were observed. The only refreshments afforded by Galega, are cocoa-nuts, fish, and a few wild roots.

This part of the Indian ocean, particularly from the north-east end of Madagascar to the equator, is strewn with sand-banks and islets, little, if at all, known to European navigators, from not being in the direct line of the route to India. Many of these were discovered in the early trading voyages of the people of Mauritius and Bourbon. Some have been explored; others, on account of the erroneous positions given them by the imperfections of navigation, could not be found; the existence of several is still doubtful; for the colonists busied in calculating the price of a slave, or of a bag of rice, could not be supposed very anxious to look for dangers out of their way. From this neglect, shipwrecks were frequent in the infancy of these colonies.

Some days after quitting Galega, calms interrupted our voyage; the ship rolled, without making any progress, seeming to bask very contentedly beneath the beams of a scorching sun. This is a tax all voyagers are compelled to pay in approaching the equator; and, unlike the penalties exacted by Neptune and his attendant Tritons, not to be evaded by bribery. One evening we were surprised by a singular phenomenon, which gave rise to many conjectures, though without any satisfactory solution as to its cause.

About eight o'clock in the evening, the sea, as far as the eye could distinguish, became, nearly, all at once, like milk, or rather resembling a thick solution of chalk in water; the surface was quite unruddled; neither was there the slightest mixture of that luminous or phosphoric appearance often observed at night during the agitation of the sea. It continued for several hours,

the sky at the same time being clear, and in the stillness of the evening, the effect could not be otherwise than uncommon;—floating on an ocean seemingly of milk, was a novel, and certainly a most unusual spectacle. I do not recollect to have read of any thing similar in the narratives of voyagers; and have exhausted all my conjectures respecting the agency of the land and the water, the sky and the atmosphere, in producing it, but in vain. I may add, however, that not the smallest peculiarity was observable in the water, though repeatedly drawn up and examined.

Having, at length, gained a glimpse of Frigate's Island, the first of this group commonly observed in approaching the harbour of Mahé from Mauritius, the breeze, which had been occasionally slight, now died away altogether. The face of nature seemed at rest, but not so our wooden castle. Agitated by what seamen term the ground swell, that is, the roll of the sea where the depth is inconsiderable, and unprotected by the shelter of a harbour—she reeled to and fro, something like the wild staggers of a drunkard, or as if tossed by the contending elements in a gale. During the day, we kept under weigh; but, to avoid being carried into danger by the currents, dropped the anchor at night in the open sea; for we were now on a vast bank of soundings, which, at inconsiderable depths, surrounds the Sechelle islands in every direction for many leagues, a peculiarity perhaps unknown in any other part of the ocean, except off Newfoundland.

Here we were for several days, gazing at the land fifteen miles distant, with the feelings of Tantalus; to have the promised object in view, and yet to be unable to reach it, is no trifling annoyance any where; to us it was doubly and trebly vexatious. In the mean time the ship was wholly surrounded by sharks; several were large, perhaps ten feet long, and seldom quitted the side of the ship, darting with a more than tiger-spring upon every thing thrown into the sea. The sailors caught a few, which gave them a fresh dish; for, like certain American warriors, they think it perfectly just to feast upon the carcase of a conquered enemy, who, had an opportunity offered, would have done the same on them.

At length, on the 23d, a breeze sprang up, and carried the ship to an anchor in the principal harbour of the island of Mahé.

This anchorage is a deep bay, presenting a semi-circle of tolerably high land; on the right, in entering from sea, appears a woody point, stretching out to some distance; on the left, an islet likewise thickly wooded; besides some smaller fragments of rock and earth beautifully tipped with shrubs and verdure. At the bottom of the bay, directly in front, is a large white man-

son, the residence of a medical gentleman, formerly surgeon of the Chiffon French frigate, captured here in 1801, by the English frigate Sybille. The land did not appear cultivated, being, in some places, stony, in others, thickly wooded, and varied here and there by abrupt rents in the earth, or ravines. In the more open parts was seen a tree of a grey colour, seemingly dead, having no leaves, and few branches, and resembling a stake fixed in the ground.

To the right, looking toward the bottom of the bay, is the governor's house, attached to which is a small battery. A few other habitations, including that of the first settler on the island, who is now old, infirm, and blind, appear on the same side indistinctly through the trees. Still farther on is the village, concealed from the shipping by lying in a ravine; the situation, like its habitations and people, appears very retired and rural; but being nearly three miles from the anchorage, the distance is almost too great to pull in a boat exposed to a fiery sun, even for the pleasures of a walk. The principal islet, (St. Anne's,) is much more convenient for a forenoon's ramble. There, turning our eyes to seaward, after viewing the bay, the Isle of Praslin, the next in size and importance, appears enveloped in blue clouds, about six leagues distant.

The Sechelle group was discovered in 1743, by M. Pecault, who had been dispatched from Mauritius by La Bourdonnais, on the report of there being several unexplored lands in this quarter. The cluster, consisting of nearly twenty islands, islets, and rocks, received the name of the then minister of marine. Mahé, the largest, was called after the projector of the expedition. The others, worthy of notice, are Praslin and Silhouette, named from ministers, and La Digue, so called from a ship being wrecked there. Others are little better than rocks, possessing a scanty soil, little or no water or vegetation, and uninhabited. The Amirante group, situated a little farther to the southward and westward, is often confounded with this; they are, however, by the people here, considered totally distinct; small vessels from Mahé often visit them for turtle or cocoa-nut oil; but though some have occasional inhabitants, none can be considered as settled.

The great bank before alluded to, surrounding the Sechelles, at no great depth below the surface of the sea, is composed of sand, rocks, and coral beds. It may be considered the base of the cluster, a kind of vast platform thrown up by nature, upon which the superstructure of the islands has been raised; or it may have been low ground overwhelmed by a vast influx of waters; or it may be destined, perhaps, in time, to be deserted by them, and to become land. Anchorage is to be found on every part of

it. The best-informed men here say it is more than 80 leagues in extent, from N. W. to S. E., and in some places is supposed to be dangerous, particularly to the northward, where it is but imperfectly known.

Mahé is about sixteen miles long, and five broad; it has two harbours; one on the S. W. side, and the other, in which we now lie at anchor, on the N. E.: it is in latitude $4^{\circ} 38'$ S. The population, at the above time, amounted to 2,650 souls. Praslin, which has likewise a good harbour, contained 261; and La Digue 71. These are the only inhabited islands of the group.

Mahé was first settled about 1765. At that period, the wish to cultivate the spices of the Dutch islands had become a favourite scheme in Mauritius; but the soil or climate of that island disagreeing with this delicate and fragrant tribe, a more favourable spot was anxiously sought; and the new settlement being nearer the equator, seemed to promise greater success. The difficulties experienced by the first adventurers proved considerable; they had no assistance from government; and, moreover, were 800 miles from resources of every kind, and the face of civilized man. Yet the prospect of ultimate advantage, as well as the desire of change, so strongly implanted in the human bosom, added to the satisfaction of living uncontrolled by laws and rulers, induced several persons to migrate hither, who, likewise, introduced slaves to cultivate the soil. For a few years they were successful; but having impoverished the ground, the crops in time failed, and several in disgust quitted their former Elysium, calling it now a desert. These errors, however, have been partially repaired. At present, therefore, the island may be considered flourishing, for such a secluded little spot, not in itself of any material consequence or value; several free people of colour having emigrated from Bourbon, to exert their industry in growing cotton, cloves, cassada, rice, and sugar-cane.

The surface of the island is irregular, presenting a diversity of hill, rock, and ravine, without any extent of flat. The rocks are granitic; the soil is in some places scanty, but good, producing abundance of wild fruits and vegetables, with no other trouble than dropping them into the ground. Cultivation is carried on in the narrow vallies, the soil there being richer and deeper than on the higher grounds, from which it is often washed down by the rains; but timber, underwood, and pasture for the sheep and cattle, are sufficiently abundant.

The beef, if we may be allowed to trust to the palate, is superior to any we have met with since our departure from England; mutton is more rare; fish less plentiful than might be expected; but poultry abundant, and cheaper than at Mauritius. The grand treat, however, to a lover of good living, turtle, is dear.

The evening of our arrival was devoted to the reception of visitors from the island, consisting of the principal people, who came off to pay their respects, the *Nisus* being the first ship of war that had appeared since the reduction of Mauritius. Next morning we formed a party to visit the village; about half-way towards the shore, the tide, which had been rapidly ebbing, became so low, that the boat struck several times, and at length fairly grounded. More than half the bay is occupied by a flat of sand and coral-beds; at low water, these are either quite uncovered, or brought so near the surface, that boats, in proceeding to the head of the bay, are obliged to take a narrow and circuitous, though deep channel, frequented by the small vessels of the island, and practicable for large ships, by dint of considerable labour. In this the *Clifton* was anchored when attacked by the *Sybille*; but vessels like the *Nisus*, intending only a short stay, remained at a considerable distance without.

Impatient to reach the shore, we did not think of taking the surest route, till, by the shock of our watery carriage against the bottom, it seemed nearly immoveable. Our impetuosity appeared to have produced an unlucky dilemma; the village was a mile distant; the ship still farther; the flat, as well as we could distinguish, seemed a series of pools and shallows; some were too deep to ford, without being drenched to the neck; others too shallow for the boat to swim; so that we had the comfortable prospect of remaining perched for several hours on the reef, and exposed to a fiery sun, unable either to return or advance, to wait for the flow of the tide. At length, however, by great exertions of the crew, the boat was dragged into deeper water; canoes, in the mean time, were dispatched from the shore, where our predicament had been observed; and, partly by means of these humble vehicles, partly carried on the shoulders of the negroes, we gained a secure footing on terra firma.

The appearance of the village is of such a description, that an enthusiast might be tempted to exclaim—here I may take up my abode, secure of being exempted from the cares of the busy world. It is placed in a small and shady glen, sheltered by the higher grounds rising on either side, and strewed here and there with a cottage; while at the upper end runs a brook, overhung by shrubs bearing fruits and flowers, and gently murmuring over a bed of pebbles. The structure of the cottages corresponds with the outline. Several are neat, and well-built; others sufficiently rustic to shew that their owners care little for external decoration; some framed merely by huddling together the rough and unshaped materials for building: gardens are attached to the majority; while the tamarind, plantain, banana, and cocoa-nut trees, shade the doors and windows. I was

charmed by this picture of rural life, for it seemed one of those calm, contented, and charming scenes of seclusion, familiar in the pages of romance, and often strongly pictured in the vivid imaginations of youth.

The people, in the mean time, crowded their doors to examine the strangers. We in return gazed as eagerly at a little insulated community, removed to so vast a distance from the general haunts of men;—shut up within themselves, dependant not only for comforts, but, I may add, almost for society, on the quadrupeds, the shrubs, fruits, and flowers that surrounded their simple abode. In passing a rustic habitation, a jolly looking man gave us an invitation to enter. Our attention had been previously excited by hearing he had been once an officer of dragoons in the republican army in Europe; but exiled hither, with many others, after the discovery of a conspiracy (that of the infernal machine I believe) in which he was suspected to have been concerned.

We did not hesitate to accept the invitation. He seemed chatty, lively, bustling, and good-humoured. In appearance he was about fifty years of age, with a full, round face, and robust person, clothed in vestments of blue dungaree; he might have sitten for the picture of John Bull;—and therefore not very like the figure we usually associate with the idea of an assassin. His humble mansion had been little indebted to the labours of architecture. The front was formed by a row of bamboos fixed in the ground an inch or two apart, and connected here and there by wicker-work: the roof was scantily thatched, and the door divided in the centre like that of an English barn, with a wooden sun shade over it. Such was the exterior; it was Jack Straw's house imitated. Within, another row of bamboos, across the middle, formed nominally two apartments; we were ushered into the inner, which evidently served "for kitchen and parlour and hall." It had a cane couch, converted at night into a bed, two rudely-shaped chairs, a table of similar workmanship, a ladder, to ascend to a species of upper apartment formed only of loose planks, two chests which answered the double purpose of cupboards and seats, and a few shelves containing cooking and table furniture suitable to the mansion, upon which, from its order and arrangement, no common pains seemed to have been bestowed.

Observing our eyes wander over his abode, the son of Mars began to apologize for its homely appearance; and at the same time eyeing a thread-bare portion of his own dress, "'Tis all," said he, with a smile "my friends in France have left me; but 'it is enough;—I am content.'" The good humour of the man left us no reason to doubt it. He insisted on regaling us

With a pleasant drink made of citrons; the addition of rum was offered, which we declined, our host remarking with a laugh, it was an unusual refusal from Englishmen. His little museum was next produced, consisting of birds, reptiles, shells, and other trifling objects of curiosity, which it was his principal occupation to pick up and dispose of to strangers. We of course made a few purchases, not indeed for their value, but rather as a return for the civilities of the collector; who, equally pleased, amused us with the gaiety of a mind at ease, in sallies of pleasantry on his present situation.

Several brooks in the Sechelle group fall into the sea by wide mouths, in which are sometimes seen alligators four or five feet long; on the banks likewise is found a species of rock crystal, but I have not yet seen any specimens. In examining a house on the adjoining high ground, we found a considerable quantity of a fine wood, termed by the people simply *bois rouge*; but, from being peculiar to the islands, called by others after their name. It is firm and durable, bears a high polish, is nearly the colour of mahogany, and being frequently more prettily streaked, might ornament the drawing-room in the form of elegant furniture. The knowledge of it hitherto has been principally confined to the Isle of France, where such articles are not in much request; yet even there it sells for half-a-dollar per foot. Several of the islands produce it; but that from La Digue is supposed to be the best; and were the quantity considerable, it might prove a profitable article of commerce.

I was gratified by meeting with the Venus' apple (*Spondia Cytherea*) brought from Otaheite by Bougainville the circumnavigator. It is a stone fruit, of a bright yellow colour, somewhat resembling the mango in taste and size, and appears to flourish in these islands; but though introduced ultimately from Mauritius, I do not recollect having seen it there. In addition to various cultivated fruits, considerable quantities of wild pines, cucumbers, and the powerful chilly, or bird-pepper (*Capsicum Frutescens*) are found among the woods. The pines, however, are by no means equal to those produced by cultivation; and the cucumbers likewise want flavour from the same cause.

Our attention was for more than one evening attracted by several apparently large birds, bending their flight across the bay at a considerable elevation, and called by the seamen *fly-ing foxes*. Two were shot on St. Anne's Island, by one of the officers. This animal, however, is in reality a large species of the bat, nearly the size of a rabbit, having something of the appearance of the fox, furnished with the wings of the bat, and

exhaling a disgusting odour. Its coat is a short, imperfect hair, apparently scorched by the fire, and of a sandy colour; the wings of a somewhat darker hue, extending about three feet from tip to tip; and the sexual peculiarities of both marked. I have seen only the female, whose breasts resemble those of the human species; she carries her young under the wing; and, I have been assured, is subject to the operation of peculiar periodical changes, at which time she resorts to the water, dipping in her flight like the swallow.

These singular animals may be said to form a connecting link between the bird and quadruped tribes; and are supposed to be peculiar to Africa and a few of the Eastern Islands;—those found on the continent of India, I understand, differ from these in several respects. Buffon, if I mistake not, supposes them to have given the ancients the first idea of harpies. More disagreeable objects, indeed, cannot well be conceived; for were one with extended wings to light upon a stranger, he might fancy himself in the embraces of an imp of darkness, and its odour the stench of the infernal regions. They seldom light on the ground, being, like the aquatic birds, unable to take flight from it: their food principally consists of wild fruits, particularly pines. The most extraordinary part of their history, perhaps, is, that many of the inhabitants eat them as a *bon bouche*, a dainty of the first order.

Several birds of handsome plumage are found in the woods. Among others a considerable number of green parrots, not remarkable for their imitative powers; and a species of dove resembling the bantam fowl, which feeds almost solely on the bird-pepper; the latter, along with some others, gives occasional amusement to a sportsman. There is likewise found here a species of large green fly, called from its form and size the animated leaf.

The neighbouring Isle of Praslin, and the adjoining islet of Cuzieuse, which contributes to form its harbour, contain the *Coco de Mer*, a curious production unknown in any other part of the habitable globe. It is a large species of cocoa-nut, commonly double, but frequently triple, quadruple, and even now and then quintuple, inclosed within one common rind and fibrous coat. Each of the nuts is about the size of a large melon, distinct in itself, though united exteriorly to the others; and the shape being somewhat oval, if you can conceive two, three, or four enormous eggs united in a circular manner, by having the surface of union slightly flattened, some idea may be formed of the *Coco de Mer*. It was first discovered on the shores of India, whither it had been carried from these islands, long before their discovery, by the winds and currents; but being thought of marine origin, received

its present name. The Indians valued it highly from its being supposed to stimulate the worship of the Paphian Goddess; and while one side of the nut was considered by some as an active poison, the other preserved equal reputation as an antidote.

The Coco de Mer is not only an object of curiosity, but an article of the utmost utility to all classes of the people. The wood, which is sufficiently firm, except in the centre, may be used for many domestic purposes; at the summit of the tree is the cabbage, which, though more bitter than that of the common palm, forms an excellent pickle. A hundred leaves make a good house, including not only the roof but the sides, partitions between apartments, doors, and window-shutters; in Praslin the majority of the houses are constructed of these materials. The down of the leaves is put into mattresses and pillows; their stalks formed into baskets and brooms; and the hearts of the younger leaves cut into narrow lengths, from which hats for both sexes are so generally made, that scarcely any others are worn in the islands. The fibrous covering of the nut is manufactured into rope, and the shell universally used as a pitcher, several containing six or eight pints; divided longitudinally, it makes plates and dishes for the negroes; and, when small, forms drinking cups. Within the islands this homely furniture takes the name of the "Praslin crockery-ware;" no part of the tree is lost; and without it the inhabitants, simple as they are, would be, perhaps, but ill supplied.

The Sechelles have been more than once a place of banishment for persons of obnoxious politics during the era of the revolution in the mother country. The last party consisted of 66 persons, of whom only four remain; the others fled to Mosambique, or to the Comoro Islands, whence they found means to get to Europe or America: no military force being kept here, escape was at all times practicable. During the war, the principal visitors have been the English cruisers, who, sustaining no interruption, permitted the occasional wants of the people to be supplied from Mauritius, in return for their refreshments and civilities. A formal agreement of neutrality had been once drawn up with the captain of an English frigate from India; but in a splenetic moment it was cancelled by General de Caen, a measure that only tended to injure the people.

The number of vessels belonging to the islands is five or six, of between 20 and 80 tons burden. Formerly they traded to Zanzibar, Mosambique, Madagascar, and the continent, for slaves, who, from what we can learn, suffered severely by being crowded into such small vessels, destitute of accommodations for their unhappy cargoes.

The climate is fine as well as healthy; the heat seldom op-

pressive, though only four degrees distant from the equator; in the shade the thermometer rarely ascends above 86 degrees in the hottest days, the atmosphere being cooled by the breeze from the sea. We were told that the oldest inhabitant does not recollect a gale of wind being experienced here; and hurricanes are quite unknown. Moderate breezes, however, prevail in the month of August. Altogether, this spot may be considered truly romantic. The wildness and simplicity of nature are discoverable in all its features, varied in every part by vallies, woods, rocks, rivulets, and sea, concentrated within the range of the eye.

On the 24th we took formal possession of the islands, by landing the marines, and hoisting the British ensign under a salute from the ship. Lieutenant Sullivan, of the marine corps, who came with us from Mauritius, remained as resident, having been appointed to this situation by Governor Faquhar, as a slight compensation for a severe wound received in the unfortunate action at Grand-Port.

Madras, May.

Early in the morning of the 10th of May, we had a glimpse of the scenery of the beautiful island of Ceylon. We coasted it nearly the whole of the day, a level shore being in the foreground, and the mountain named Friar's Hood in the rear. Our track thus far had been rather unusual; for, while at Sechelles, Captain Braver was informed of a route to India, familiar to the traders of Mauritius and Bourbon, but not generally known. This was, to cross the line to the latitude of about 1°30' N., and then run directly eastward, by which a safe and speedy passage would be insured through the Maldivé islands. On the 1st instant we crossed the equator, in long. 61°30' E., and kept in the prescribed track. On the 6th, in the morning, low land appeared from aloft, to the northward, but in no other quarter, so that this is evidently a broad and clear strait through the Maldivé cluster, which is sometimes a source of apprehension to the mariner bound to the bay of Bengal; for this channel, though known, has been little frequented.

The winds had become so light after crossing the line, that we seemed to make little way; the currents, however, made ample amends, by forcing us so impetuously toward the coast of India, that no dependence could be placed on the dead (or common) reckoning. As an instance of this I may state, that the ship's position at noon on the 6th, was lat. 1°38' N., long. by account 68°42'; by chronometer, or true computation, 73°47' east! being a difference of five degrees in as many days by currents alone. The force and direction of these likewise serve to explain the appearance of the *Coco de Mer* in a recent state,

on the shores of India, as before-mentioned, though produced only in Isles Praslin and La Digue.

We had scarcely anchored in Madras road, when the general attention was directed towards three men, half erect in the water, making to the ship without perceptible support. A few minutes explained the wonder;—they were on one of those far-famed machines called Catamarans. This consists simply of three logs of wood, about five feet long, fastened together, one end being rounded off to make greater way through the water; the surface is flat, and level with the sea, and of course continually washed. One or more men, squatted on their knees, work it with paddles alternately on either side: the position appears singularly uneasy; my joints ache at the bare idea. On this slippery fabric, however, will they venture off to shipping, with letters or messages, when boats cannot make the attempt; for many hours they thus remain immersed in water, being frequently washed off, and as speedily regaining the vehicle by swimming.

The trusty *Mercury* of the float, who had no other covering than a rag round his middle, and another twisted round his head in the form of a turban, after a variety of *salams*, or salutations, drew from the folds of the latter a dispatch announcing the death of Admiral Drury, and the sailing of the expedition against Java, under Sir Samuel Auchmuty and Commodore Broughton. It was likewise accompanied by Lord Minto.

A violent hurricane, or syphen, came on two days after, far exceeding in violence any that had occurred here since 1782, when the fleet of Sir Edward Hughes was nearly destroyed. Great fears, therefore, were entertained for the safety of the armament.

To cross the surf in Madras road is at all times an unpleasant undertaking, and sometimes even dangerous; but as the wonders of the new scene before us could not be enjoyed otherwise than by landing, we took advantage of a *Massoolah* boat, which came off to the ship. Having gained the outer line, or bar, of the surf, for it commonly breaks in three distinct ridges, each nearer than the other to the shore, the rowers simultaneously paused; their hitherto cheerful song likewise ceased; but when the surf broke, and an opportunity offered for pulling in with greater safety, they exerted all their strength, bursting at the same moment into loud and hurried exclamations, which, combined with a peculiar expression of countenance, presented a very vivid and natural picture of alarm. At every break this was repeated; the force of the surge was indescribable, whirling the boat forward on its white and shattered summit, we scarcely

knew whither ; while, by the shocks, she trembled as if threatening to fall into a thousand pieces.

Having landed, we were conveyed in palanquins to an inn on the verge of Black-Town, and bordering the Esplanade. Here we had a good view of the port and its numerous houses : Black-Town, so called from the prevailing colour of the population, contains little worthy of notice ; it is defended from sudden inroads by a ditch and a few works, now little attended to ; the streets are small and irregular ; the houses of the natives are commonly mean, often displaying squalid poverty, though plastered with the white mortar called chunam. The richer class, however, sometimes affect elegance in their habitations and equipages ; but though the majority of native merchants have the reputation of wealth, few comparatively seem fond of displaying it. Several Europeans likewise reside here, or have their shops and counting-houses in the vicinity : for a family residence, however, it is quite unfashionable. The population is very large, some say 150,000, but this, probably, is exaggerated by a fourth ; it consists of all the Eastern nations and religious sects, Mahomedans, Persees, Armenians, the followers of Confucius, Black, or, as they are termed, Portuguese Christians, besides whites from all the nations of Europe, and the usual disciples of Bhudha and Bramah. An obvious distinction among the latter strikes a stranger at first sight. Some have a perpendicular line of yellow pigment drawn on the forehead, immediately over the nose, while others have it extended horizontally ; the former designating the followers of *Vishnou*, the latter of *Shiva*, commonly called Malabars. From the forehead the eye is directly attracted to the lips, on the lower of which is often curiously projected a red mass, or ball, resembling a diseased excrescence, but formed of the betel leaf, and Areca nut, mixed with a finer sort of chunam, which corrodes and blackens the teeth, (a beauty among Hindoo fashionables,) renders the gums livid, and imparts a deep red colour to the saliva, so that the mouth seems as if gorged with blood.

A few Portuguese and Armenian churches, besides mosques, and pagodas, are scattered through Black-Town. The range of buildings on the beach near the landing-place, consisting of private offices and the naval arsenal, at a distance looks grand, but on a nearer view seems unfinished. The appropriate mansions, however, of familiar intercourse among the wealthier inhabitants, are the garden-houses, so called from being situated more in the country, amid trees, flowers, gardens, and all the other attendants on rural life. Here luxury seems to have retreated from cities, to seek more exquisite joys in retirement ; here, likewise, the beauty and fashion of the place meet to run

the round of pleasure. The houses are generally detached, and are also at some distance both from the fort and from Black-Town: the principal people inhabit them, and the merchant, fatigued with the labours of the day in the counting-house, retires hither at four or five o'clock, to rest for the evening in the bosom of his family. They are in fact, to Madras, what some of the better suburbs are to London, with this difference, that in the latter are seen plain unassuming men, in the former, more consequential characters, who, with many fine qualities, are accused of a degree of pride not altogether becoming the mercantile character.

Fort St. George is the second fortress in India, being inferior only to Fort William. On one side it skirts the sea; on the other an esplanade of some extent joins the glacis: the construction is irregular, though good, but some parts seem falling to decay, for Hyder Ally is no longer thundering at the gates.

Within, the intermixture of civil and military life appears remarkable. It is, in fact, a small, though well-filled town, containing several good houses, the extensive stores of the company, the merchants' counting-houses, and other offices, intermingled with guns, bastions, and barracks. Here you may contrast at every step the man of war with the man of traffic, the muster-roll with the ledger, the bayonet with the pen, and the sentry-box with the desk and counter. The precaution of keeping within the walls, was at first adopted from the facility with which immense armies of cavalry formerly overran the plains, destroying or carrying off every species of property, as well as the inhabitants, and retreating before it was well known where the blow had been struck.

The private houses are lofty, the apartments generally spacious; and as coolness is the principal object, few are decorated with those endless masses of rich furniture which distinguish those of the mother country. An open space in the centre of the fort, contains a fine statue of the late Marquis Cornwallis, executed, if my memory be correct, by Bacon; the Company certainly owed him this tribute of respect. From the works may be had a good view of the sea; in the evening the walk is refreshing, but walking, among the fair sex at least, is not in fashion, for a lady would almost as soon think of going out naked, as without an equipage.

Allured by the serenity of the evening, we rambled over the Esplanade. The Mount road, the grand avenue to Madras, is fine; it is lined by rows of large trees, and in the cool of the day is frequented by numerous equipages, adorned by many elegant women. This is, indeed, the fashionable drive of the place, where the gay children of pleasure meet to exchange the

ceremony of nods, or to retail the chit-chat of the moment, previously to the hour of dinner.

Government-House is a spacious though heavy pile of building. Architects say it requires a new roof, and several other alterations, to render it tolerable to an eye of any taste. It was erected, after his own design I believe, by the celebrated Lord Clive, one of the many great military geniuses produced by the eighteenth century, and to whom England owes her first secure footing in India. His other talents, therefore, may amply apologise for any deficiency in architectural science.

St. Thomas's Mount, which gives name to the road, is a slight elevation, two or three miles distant, where the Portuguese have a chapel, dedicated to that saint. Here, likewise, he is said to have been interred; and bones are shewn as his, with all the solemnities of Popery, and revered with all the savage superstition of Paganism: miracles are of course common;—but all the saints in the calendar have not power enough to work the miracle of making knavish priests cease to impose on the credulity of the people. We saw the nabob's palace at a distance, and would have examined it, but understood that all, except certain persons appointed by the governor, were interdicted.

Port-Louis, Mauritius, June 30.

We sailed from Madras, and had scarcely rounded Canoniere Point, after a tedious passage, when several strange vessels were discovered in the harbour of Port-Louis, Isle of France. In half-an-hour more, with mingled emotions of surprise and exultation, we heard that a French squadron had appeared off the island, and had been engaged, beaten, and partly captured, by an inferior force, under circumstances which conferred great credit on the gallantry and decision of the senior officer, Captain C. M. Schomberg.

It should be observed, that when the accounts of the unfortunate engagement at Grand-Port reached Europe, both England and France, not calculating on the immediate reduction of the island, sent out reinforcements, the one to regain her old, the other to secure her newly-acquired superiority. The English force arrived a few days after our departure: the French, consisting of three heavy frigates, filled with troops, taking a more circuitous route, to avoid the English cruizers, did not appear before the 7th of May.

They were discovered early in the morning by the *Phœbe*, *Galatea*, and *Racehorse*, cruising off Round Island; and, encouraged by their superiority, made a shew of attacking our ships, which, in order to effect a junction with the *Astrea*, then in the harbour, stood down the coast toward Port-Louis. The

latter ship was soon under weigh; but it was not a little singular, that the wind, which blows out of the port at almost all seasons, thus affording free egress to shipping, came at this moment directly in, with a strong sea-breeze, so that the remainder of the day was spent in the tedious and laborious manual operation of *warping*, to extricate the vessel from the port and adjoining shoals.

In the mean time the enemy, who had soon relinquished the pursuit of the English ships, stood off to sea, leaving no clue by which their route could be traced. The situation of our squadron, therefore, though now united, and enabled to act offensively, became anxiously harassing from ignorance of where the intended blow was to be struck. A boat's crew, who had landed from their commodore near Port South-East, and were made prisoners, would not, or could not, communicate any information. In this situation Captain Schomberg adopted the resolution of searching for them in Madagascar; his conjectures fortunately proved correct. The French commander, in want of a friendly port after so long a voyage, and willing to attempt something rather than return to France as he came, deliberated whether he should attack the Isle of Bourbon, or the Portuguese settlement of Mosambique; the former was determined upon; preparations were made for the descent, the troops were even embarked in the boats for this purpose, when the design was abandoned, and, to supply immediate wants, a course was shaped for Madagascar, where a small detachment of English soldiers were made prisoners in the fort at Iamatave.

Eager in pursuit, the evening of the 19th of June closed on our ships with a prospect of the land near this harbour; and early in the morning the rays of a vivid sun seemed to possess new brilliancy, when reflected on the enemy's ships standing under easy sail to windward, the breeze then blowing off the land. Every effort was made to approach them that a leeward position admitted; toward noon, however, the wind seemed gradually dying away, about three o'clock, just as the hostile squadrons were coming into contact, it ceased altogether on the British, while the enemy, more favoured by position, still retained it in a sufficient degree to continue his evolutions.

The French commander, however, finding an action to be ultimately unavoidable, and encouraged by the accidental advantage offered by the elements, suddenly adopted the bold manœuvre of becoming himself the assailant: by bearing down upon the nearest of the English vessels, he hoped to overpower them before the others could come to their assistance. This judicious scheme had nearly succeeded. When within half-gun

shot, however, of the *Galatea* and *Phœbe*, his squadron was likewise becalmed, but had the good fortune to be placed, by the accidents of weather, in a position where they poured in a destructive fire for nearly two hours on the English frigates, without being exposed to more than a partial return. In the evening a breeze separated the squadrons; the enemy appeared in tolerable order;—the *Phœbe* and *Galatea* were somewhat damaged, particularly the latter, nor did she again come into action; the *Astrea*, which, but for the calm, would have been the leading ship, was now, such are the chances of evolutions at sea, the most distant.

Night approached, and in this situation, which seemed a momentary triumph to the enemy, considering their usual ill-success in contests with the English navy, it required equal courage and promptitude of decision to retrieve the loss to which, from the uncertainty of the elements, all naval operations are liable. Not dispirited by being deprived of the service of one of his ships, Captain Schomberg prepared to attack the enemy again the moment the damages of his remaining consort, the *Phœbe*, were repaired. This was about seven in the evening; the two commodores, equally tenacious of personal fame and national honour, met, as if by mutual agreement; and as the vessels ranged alongside of each other, the loud cheer of exultation which issued from the English frigate, seemed, as indeed it proved, the knell of death to her opponent. The contest, though short, was extremely close and bloody. Toward the conclusion the French commander, Commodore Roquerbert, of the legion of honour, a brave and skillful officer, and a favourite of Napoleon, having accompanied him in several of his campaigns, was killed; his ship, *La Renomme*, soon afterwards surrendered, with the loss of nearly half her crew and troops, the commanding-officer only being left alive on the quarter-deck. Another frigate, *La Clorinde*, likewise made the signal of submission; but, taking advantage of the darkness of the night, and the crippled state of our ships, subsequently made her escape.

The third ship of the squadron, *La Nereide*, was perceived the succeeding morning at a considerable distance, flying from the scene of defeat; and being pursued as soon as circumstances would permit, was discovered in the port of Tamatave. This is an insecure reef-harbour, situated nearly in the centre of the eastern shore of Madagascar, lately a settlement of the French, frequented on account of the trade in bullocks and rice. So pestilential is it in the wet season, that of fifty English soldiers of the 22d regiment, sent thither after the reduction of Mauritius, almost every man was either dead or dying when the French appeared. The battery, therefore, was easily secured, and the

frigate warped into a narrow passage guarded by shoals: to enter this by force, and without local knowledge, was nearly impracticable, and in case of such an event, preparations were made for burning her: a negotiation was therefore entered into, which terminated in the quiet surrender of *La Nereide*, along with a few small traders from Mauritius, made prizes by the enemy's squadron on its first appearance.

During the time the enemy remained off this island, and for some days afterwards, the people eagerly assembled on the hills, to witness, as they said, the annihilation of the English. Their agitation and anxiety proved extremely amusing; by turns they danced, sung, frowned, laughed, stamped, and uttered the most abominable oaths. De Caen, it seems, on his departure, had promised the speedy arrival of an armament that should drive the English into the sea, and, forgetting the short lapse of time, they began to believe that this was the promised deliverance; some openly triumphed, and a few even hinted at offering us terms. You may therefore conceive their vexation, when the news arrived of its defeat; few, indeed, could be convinced of the fact till the prizes entered the harbour; and, as the only consolation the case admitted, they fully convinced themselves, if they could not any one else, that their unfortunate frigates had very few guns, and very inexperienced crews on-board, and were sent out only to convey troops—not to fight.

After this *accident*, as they termed it, a new play at least was required, to restore the good-humour of the town. The piece was a medley of comedy, opera, and farce; we did not fail to attend, but without being highly gratified by the vocal part of the entertainment, though meant as the principal treat. The audience, or at least the female part of it, was very numerous and very attractive.

We are now to join the expedition against Batavia, once the great emporium of the commerce and wealth of the eastern world, and long the colonial capital of Holland. Admiral Stopford, from the Cape of Good Hope, has determined to assume the direction of the expedition, in consequence of the death of Admiral Drury, in India: as part of his squadron, we therefore follow him thither, along with the frigates *President* and *Phœbe*. The route to Java lies across the extreme breadth of the great Indian ocean, by a circuitous course, in which, it seems, it will be necessary to skirt the western shores of New Holland, in order to gain a leading wind to our destination. The voyage will, therefore, be so tedious, that we almost despair of arriving in time to share in the capture; no exertion, however, is spared to expedite the squadron: three days only have been allowed to refit and victual the frigates, one of these like-

wise having just come out of action; but it is another proof how speedily British men-of-war are prepared for emergencies.

Off the Island of Java, August.

We sailed from Port-Louis on the morning of the 2d of July, attended by our consorts, the two frigates before-mentioned. The wind was favourable, and the day pleasant, until obscured for some time by one of those phenomena of the atmosphere familiar to seamen. While a breeze carried us up to the cluster of islets off the northern part of Mauritius, another, equally fair, brought a strange vessel down toward Port-Louis, in the precisely opposite direction;—the clouds by which both were accompanied were heavy, and at length meeting, and being oppositely electrified, were precipitated upon us in a heavy and instantaneous burst of rain. These were the N. W. and S. E. winds; the latter prevails near the island almost the whole of the year; but in this instance the former proved the stronger. At times, when the opposite currents of air do not come into immediate contact, it is not a little singular to observe two vessels pass within a stone's throw of each other, both with a fair wind, yet both proceeding to directly opposite points.

On the third day after our departure, we had a distant view of Rodriguez, though the passage thither usually occupies more than a week, that island being, as the sailors say, “In the wind's eye” of Mauritius. The breeze, from being favourable, became now the reverse, and we stood away to the southward, passing to windward of Bourbon, of which the convex summit was just discernible. In about a fortnight afterwards, the decrease of temperature compelled us to substitute the comfortable apparel of England for the light clothing of the tropics. Yet this was only in the same parallel of latitude as Madeira, so much keener is the southern than the northern hemisphere. The vicissitudes were likewise considerable, for between rain, sunshine, heats, chills, foul, and fair winds, the phenomenon of a gale occasionally amused us with the contrast to a calm.

In latitude 35° 47' S. longitude, 85° 45' E., we met with the monsoon, or trade-wind, and approaching New Holland on the 6th of August, in the morning, land was discovered in the vicinity of the north-west cape, the most prominent part of the coast. As we neared it, the eye anxiously ranged over the widely-extended surface, in order to fix on some inviting spot where might be traced the habitations of men; but nothing of this kind could be distinguished. The shore was low, sandy, and desolate, without the least intermixture of trees or verdure. A chain of breakers, on which the sea beat with the utmost fury, lined the coast.

On the following day, the 7th, we took a farewell view of this land, which, in its present unknown state, may still safely retain the old appellation of Terra Incognita. Shortly afterwards it was fancied that the Rosemary Islands, an imaginary group, I believe, were visible; but this proved groundless. Another island, farther from the land, said to have been discovered many years ago by a French vessel, occasioned us some uneasiness from the uncertainty of its position, rendering a casual meeting not improbable; but nothing of this description could be distinguished.

During a clear night we observed the same apparent milkiness of the sea which I have before mentioned, as occurring near the Sechelle group, and now, as well as then, we were equally at a loss to assign any probable cause for it, except the vicinity of the land. When drawn, the water contained a very small portion, scarcely perceptible; indeed, of a fine filamentous substance quite transparent, such as I have frequently seen where sea-weed is abundant. This, perhaps, rather than any peculiarity in the atmosphere, may give rise to the phenomenon, for though the weather continued the same, it did not recur a second time; and, as a proof of the fact being uncommon, our consorts were so much alarmed as to *leave-to*, till our previous experience removed their fears of danger.

Early in the morning of the 13th the land became distinguishable from the mast-head, and in a few hours the squadron entered the strait dividing Java from Bally, and which retains the latter name. The passage is not so broad but that an excellent view is obtained of the shores of both islands; the latter being somewhat abrupt, the former lined with topes of cocoa-nut trees, agreeably diversified, and the hills clothed with a verdure seemingly more bright to our view from the recollection of the contrast presented by New Holland.

A great number of small boats, curiously constructed, occupied both shores, some apparently fishing, and others passing to and fro under sail with unusual velocity; two or three came near us, but those on-board did not express any inclination to visit us, and we were too much in haste to invite them. The boats seemed very neat, fitted with one sail, painted white, and with what are called outriggers, pieces of wood projecting over both gunwales, which, in case of the wind pressing down the boat, form a point of support on the surface of the water, and thus afford security against upsetting.

The next morning, a remarkable hill on the Java shore attracted our attention; the summit at first was enveloped in a white nightcap of vapour, which now and then clearing away, presented a magnificent cone, cultivated near the base, and the view of which excited many a wish for its fruits and roots: for

after having been several weeks at sea, these are luxuries more grateful to the eye of a sailor, than the bones of a favourite saint to the most orthodox Catholic.

Night again overtook us, entangled by baffling winds amid a labyrinth of islets not marked in any of the charts or books on-board, so that it became necessary to proceed with great caution. Neither could the island of Madura be distinguished, though conjectured by us not to be distant more than a few miles: thus the suspicions formed, the evening before, that this was not the proper channel, began to be confirmed.

Madura was still invisible next morning; fortunately, however, we had escaped from the clusters of islets which seemed as thickly scattered here as pebbles on the highway, and upon which there was almost equal danger of stumbling. About noon the rocks termed the Four Brothers, from their similarity, were observed, and our position thus, after much anxiety, ascertained. By some it was now conjectured we had passed through the strait of Allass, others attributed the errors of the navigation to currents during the night, in addition to the erroneous positions assigned the straits in the principal charts. It must be confessed, indeed, that these important guides to the mariner are too often manufactured like the facetious Peter Pindar's razors,—not to use, but to sell; for we frequently see a sheet of paper daubed over with the names of Bali and Madura, and Lombac and Rangelang, and Sumbawa, and a hundred other islands in this sea, without in the least noticing their distance or relative situations with respect to each other. No part of the ocean, perhaps, is strewn with so many islands of all sizes, from mere rocks to the extent of kingdoms: several have volcanoes, so that the Neptunist and the Plutonist may each support his theory in tracing these wrecks of a world extending hence to China. In fact, so thickly are they scattered, that it would seem as if a vast continent had dropped from heaven and been dashed to pieces like glass, by coming in contact with the water.

Passing the western end of Madura, near the entrance of the channel dividing it from Java, we fell in with a small vessel, a prize to one of the frigates from India, which, being of no value, was burned. From the crew, intelligence was received of two French frigates lying a few miles up the Madura strait, under the protection of a strong fortification: these we had indistinctly observed the preceding evening; unable, however, to gain any news of the expedition, we stood down the coast for information, and at night anchored under a range of elevated land not far from the port of Samarang, named the Japara hills.

About 12 o'clock an alarm of ships-of-war approaching, roused

us to prepare for a hostile encounter; they proved, however, to be a detachment from the English squadron, proceeding to blockade the enemy, and likewise to open a negotiation with the Sultan of Madura, in order to detach him from the French interest. We now heard that the English forces, contrary to the original determination, had landed near Batavia, that that city had been taken, the enemy afterwards defeated in an engagement, and ultimately driven into a strong hold some miles in the rear, termed Cornelis, which was at present invested by the whole British army.

Proceeding, therefore, with all expedition, for Batavia Roads, we arrived, on the morning of the 20th, after passing innumerable islets situated in the mouth of the bay, which, in addition to defending it from the violence of the sea, had a pretty appearance. This was the general rendezvous for both fleet and army.

Batavia, August.

The expedition against the island of Java had been planned previously to the attack upon Mauritius, though the latter had the priority in execution.—The greater part of both the military and naval forces were, however, soon hurried off from that island, to prepare, in Madras Roads, for their ulterior destination. The army, commanded by Sir Samuel Auchmuty, consisted of more than 11,000 effective men, half of whom were Europeans; and the squadron comprised nearly all the naval force of India.

It was determined to attack Batavia, the capital, where the principal stand was expected to be made. The Eastern division of the Island had been at first judged more assailable; but this scheme, after mature consideration, was judiciously relinquished, and the engineers, aided by the local knowledge of some of the officers of the navy, having discovered a good landing-place at the village of Chillingching, twelve miles north-east of Batavia, and beyond a considerable river named Antjol, the disembarkation took place on the evening of the 4th of August, without opposition.

The advance of Colonel Gillespie on the city of Batavia, the taking possession, the frustration of the enemy's night attack, his defeat at Weltevreden on the 10th, and his retreat to Cornelis, where the ultimate stand was to be made for the preservation of the island, are already sufficiently before the public. I shall, therefore, proceed to a few details, which are not so well known, relative to the storming of the entrenched camp of Cornelis, of which the following is a brief description.

Cornelis, or Mester-Cornelis, constructed by General Daendels for the main defence of the island, is situated on the great

road running eastward from Batavia and Weltevreden along the northern coast of Java. The name is derived from the former proprietor of a sorry fort and house nearly in the centre of the position, having the road in front and the river of Jacatra in the rear. This fortification is merely a square wall, slight in its structure, with a mound of earth raised in each corner within, on which was placed a gun of small calibre, more for shew than use, being nearly unserviceable. But the strength of the position lay in a series of redoubts surrounding the houses in the centre at a greater or less distance, the farthest off being about a mile. They all commanded the great road, which ran through them, the rearmost overlooking the more advanced, so that it became necessary, in an assault, to carry the whole in succession, ere quiet possession of any particular one could be secured; the larger redoubts were seven in number; the smaller, scattered here and there on points of minor importance, may have been nearly double. The former were strong works, mounting sixteen or twenty-four pounders, surrounded by broad and deep ditches, a sufficient parapet, and chevaux-de-frise; and the approaches were guarded by pits, or trous-de-loup, in which were fixed sharp stakes. The circumference of the whole might have been between four and five miles. The right flank of the position was secured by a broad artificial water-course, named the Sloken; the left by the river of Jacatra, and the banks of both thoroughly commanded by the enemy's artillery. In front, towards the English lines, and intersecting the great road, was a wide and deep ditch; still further in advance, to the distance of 700 yards, the trees and jungle had been cut down to prevent the covert approach of a besieging force; and in the centre of the position, not far from the house already mentioned, was placed a park of artillery, to act wherever circumstances might render it necessary. The rear of Cornelis, looking toward the interior, with which the communication was perfectly uninterrupted, was, if possible, still stronger than either front or flanks, and, in case of a reverse, left open an easy retreat to the country. The number of pieces of cannon here was supposed to exceed 250; General Jumel, a Frenchman, commanded the troops under the immediate orders of General Janssen in person; in fact, Cornelis seemed as strong as men and guns, and defences of every description, could make it.

Pretty confident of baffling our further operations, all the European, and the majority of the best-disciplined native troops, had been concentrated here, amounting, it is supposed, at the lowest estimate, to about 14,000 men. After the action of the 10th, they seemed to confine themselves within their entrench-

ments; our army, in the mean time, took up a position as near as possible, and ground was marked out for a twelve-gun, an eight-gun, and a mortar-battery. On the 20th, 500 English seamen joined the army, and on the same night the construction of the batteries was commenced.

During the five following days, a heavy fire was kept up on each side; and, at eleven o'clock on the night of the 25th, the reserve of the army, amounting to about 1,500 men, under the command of Colonel Gillespie, who had already conspicuously distinguished himself, received orders to hold itself in readiness. At twelve, or a little after, it marched, entirely a secret to the other troops, and almost to those engaged; for few but the principal officers knew its precise destination. This column was supported by another under Colonel Gibbs: they were to constitute the principal attack; and, when once engaged with the enemy, the whole army was to advance, and, if possible, force its way into the position by the front.

Great difficulties had occurred respecting the most accessible point of Cornelis, on which the assault might be directed. Want of intelligence had been felt on more than one occasion, and particularly on this point; the people of the town were either ignorant of the plan of the works, or at least, when interrogated, pleaded ignorance. The left flank and front were judged impracticable without a vast, and perhaps ineffectual, sacrifice of lives; the right flank promised better, but only by the assistance of a surprise. One of the redoubts here, it appeared, was situated beyond the Sloken, the water-course before noticed, but communicating with the body of the position by a small bridge, which, if it could be secured, and the redoubt stormed at the same moment, would open a passage to the others, though still exposed to a destructive fire. On this, therefore, as the only practicable point, was the assault to be made.

After leaving the English lines, the column, in order to reach this flank, had to make a long detour through an enclosed country. The guide, on this occasion, was a Dutch deserter, who had been stationed at the point to be attacked. But the intricacy of the jungle and plantations, the darkness of the night, and the silence necessary to be observed on so perilous an expedition, caused considerable delay and confusion. At length accident separated the van from the rear of the column; the latter paused, uncertain which path to pursue. At this moment, a rustling among the bushes alarmed the head of a division with the apprehension of a tiger, an animal common in the island; the men fell back, notwithstanding the exertions of the officers; those in the rear felt, and communicated the im-

pulse ; and it was not till after the lapse of some minutes that order was restored ;—another proof of the strange heterogeneous composition of human nature, which could make nearly a thousand men, with fixed bayonets in their hands, who, in the face of day, would have walked deliberately up to the cannon's mouth, feel alarmed, in the dark, at shadows. The words of command, during the march, were commonly conveyed along the line in whispers.

The dawn of day disclosed the vicinity of the enemy's works: sentinels were passed, and a whole picquet killed or taken prisoners, before the approach of the English was known. The enemy, however, was not unprepared; a volley of grape from the nearest redoubts, particularly No. 3, where General Janssen was said to be in person, on the first alarm, issued on our troops, who, with amazing quickness and intrepidity, carried it in a manner that nothing could withstand. Pursuing this advantage, the bridge was seized and passed, though commanded by more than thirty pieces of cannon, showering grape and round-shot; turning to the left, when over the Sloken, the redoubt, No. 4, was attacked and taken, after a desperate resistance. In the mean time, Nos. 1 and 2 were assaulted in front, flanks, and rear, and likewise carried, after a dreadful carnage; in the former a magazine exploded, and destroyed many of our brave fellows, as well as enemies, who had escaped every other danger.

General Janssen had now collected a strong body of men, covered by several pieces of artillery, near the small fort of Cornelis, after retiring, or rather being beaten, from the redoubts. The position was imposing, the attitude of his troops apparently firm, but this continued only for a moment; for, being charged by the small body of English troops as yet within the lines, they were completely beaten, and fled along the high road to the interior, followed by the main body of our army, which had now come up. More than once the flying foe attempted a stand, but was as often overwhelmed. The English dragoons cut many down with little resistance, so much were they panic-stricken. Their own cavalry, in the confusion, were in the van, instead of being in the rear, of the fugitives; the road was completely wedged with a moving mass that could neither advance nor retire; some thousands were made prisoners; others threw away their arms and took to the woods; the retreat, in short, from being at first tolerably orderly, soon became a total rout. The whole army was irrecoverably disorganized; and the country covered by straggling parties without arms or order. The strength of the enemy's army, according to the accounts of their officers, did not exceed 9,000 men;

of these they admit only 1600 to have been Europeans. Our statements make their total force 13,000; and nearly double the number of whites which they report. The native troops did not seem to want either discipline or courage; the latter, however, is rather passive than active; more calculated for defence than offence; they seem to want the animal vivacity and enthusiasm of Europeans; in some places they fought desperately; in others they stood firmly to be bayoneted, or cut down, without offering to surrender.

The governor, with the few officers that escaped capture, fled to Buitenzorg, about thirty-six miles distant, accompanied by a small party of cavalry only, the sole remains of the army. He had several narrow escapes from being made prisoner during the action; as had also General Jumel, commander of the troops. In short, no destruction was ever more complete.

Batavia, August.

This great city is of very considerable extent, being in shape nearly oblong. Its extreme length is north and south, the latter extremity looking toward Weltevreden, the former to the fort or castle, which is itself not far from the sea, having a muddy swamp exhaling impure vapours between. The approach from the bay, however, is dirty and disagreeable—from Weltevreden, grand, beautiful, and imposing; no contrast can be more striking, for it in a manner constitutes the extremes of deformity and beauty: by the former, the eye of a stranger is hurt and disappointed; by the latter, his expectations are exceeded. The streets are broad and airy; and, except when disfigured by a muddy canal in the centre, floating filth of every description, dead and alive, not unhandsome: they are pretty regularly laid out, intersecting each other at right angles, and planted with trees along the canals as well as the foot-paths which adjoin the houses; between these rows lies the carriage-road; and, notwithstanding the stigma sometimes cast on Dutch taste for the intermixture of vegetation, I own I admire the arrangement. I will not, however, say so much for the style of Dutch architecture. The houses, indeed, are commonly large and roomy, substantially, though not perhaps very elegantly built; within, they possess all the conveniences adapted to the national taste in this climate; without, they sometimes look heavy, although in extent frequently trenching on the outline of palaces. Batavia is another Cape Town on a vast scale; the general features substantially preserved but enlarged, polished and beautified; the habitations decorated white without, the wood-work green, or mahogany colour; and the only difference is, that the canals of Cape Town have been

filled up. There is, after all, something neat in the aspect of a Dutch town; it may sometimes want animation and variety, as the merit of some pictures consists in their business and bustle; yet fine houses, with wood and water intermixed, ought, when tolerably arranged, to please even a fastidious eye.

It was originally surrounded by walls, which, having long fallen to decay, or been intentionally taken down for the benefit of health, cannot be said now to exist. The communication with the suburbs was kept up by four gates with draw-bridges; of these, one or two remain; they were, with the usual caution and jealousy of the Dutch, strictly guarded at night in case of any sudden movement of the natives, which seems to have been at all times a subject of apprehension. In the suburbs, which are very extensive, exists a vast population of Javanese, Malays, strangers from the countries and islands in the East, and Chinese. These occupy the largest district, and seem more numerous, if we may judge by their numbers in the streets, than all the others put together.

The public buildings are neither very new nor numerous. One or two churches, Mahometan and Heathen temples, the Stadt-house, the Hospital, and a few others, constitute the major part; but what appears truly singular is, that there is neither theatre nor ball-room in this capital,—a strange want of taste, if not of sociability, among the people;—at least, what are we to think of those who can prefer the elegant luxuries of a pipe and bottled porter, to the fascinations of the tragic or comic muse, or the exhilarating enjoyments of music and dancing?

The Stadt-house, answering to our English Town-hall, situated on one side of an open area, fronts the principal avenue to the castle. The entrance is formed by a flight of stone-steps and a semicircular range of pillars supporting a balcony. An immense mahogany-coloured stair-case, apparently fashioned in the year 1000, leads to the upper apartments: they are lofty and spacious, but destitute of ornament, and in many places verging to decay. The Burgher Senate had their sittings here to regulate the internal police of the city.

About two or three hundred yards distant is a neat church, of modern erection, where divine service, according to the Calvinist ritual, is performed. We could not gain admission; but an English officer informed us, that, seeing several open graves within it some days before, he had inquired the names of the intended tenants, and found that only two were to be immediately occupied;—the others were merely a *provision against contingencies in consequence of the influx of strangers*: so you see, if accidents in the way of mortality should happen to us here, we shall be provided for. In other respects, I am told,

very little delicacy is observed on this melancholy occasion: the death of a friend is no more considered here than the fall of a soldier by his comrades in the field-of-battle; for the fortune of the one, and the knapsack of the other, form the main points for the consideration of the survivors. An anecdote, characteristic of the general feeling on this point, is related of the female proprietor of a boarding-house in the city.—Being applied to by an acquaintance for accommodations under her roof, she regretted her inability to receive him, on account of her house being already filled,—“But,” added the dame, with affectionate earnestness, “do not be impatient; my lodgers are new-comers; and you know, my dear friend, we are certain of death vacancies in a short time.”

The avenue leading to the drawbridge of the castle is through an arch adorned with bad figures of two warriors, male and female, the remainder of the area being fenced off by wooden palings. The walk itself is agreeable and shady, running between lofty trees of the tamarind and Canary-nut species, which afford a partial shelter from the fervour of the sun. On either side are extensive buildings, used as depôts of warlike-stores. The fort formerly contained several of the government offices, the hall of audience, chamber of the council of the Indies, and some others, besides extensive stores, which, being no longer wanted for their original purposes, had been lately teeming with the spices of the East: the destruction of these formed the only object of Governor Janssen in involving the buildings in a general conflagration. At a short distance stood some magazines, unroofed at the same time, because they could not be safely fired; a few had been gutted by the natives before the entrance of the English troops; and coffee, sugar, and spices, were plentifully strewed in the streets. The fortifications of the castle, never at any time very formidable to a European force, had been for some time verging to the same condition as the walls.

The canals, to which I before alluded, do not appear to be so numerous as they formerly were; and it is only to be regretted, that General Daendels, who seems to have possessed both the inclination and power, did not wholly obliterate the nuisance.—They are about thirty feet broad, and two or three deep; some have a languid stream, others scarcely any; but all crowded with the very germ and soul of putrefaction, to which the sun speedily gives life and action. In the Chinese suburb one or two were completely stagnant, the surface covered by decomposed animal and vegetable matters, converted into the usual green scum of such filthy places, almost alive and in motion, and exhaling odours that might poison Hygeia

herself. Over these are several small bridges, not at all of a piece with the other buildings of the city, the inhabitants being too fond of boats to care much about bridges. Some bad qualities are attributed to the trees that line the streets, such as preventing a free circulation of air, and forming a receptacle for the concentration of the noxious vapours arising from the filthy pools around them; to these I may add the doctrine of the vegetable physiologists, that they give off carbonic acid gas during the night. These objections, however, seem trivial; for they are too few in number to be in any way productive of harm; and admitting them to attract impure exhalations, and retain them till finally dispersed by the wind, this would rather be an argument in their favour than otherwise. I can vouch, however, that there is no want of a free current of air in the streets; for while wandering to and fro during the period of the fiery sea-breeze, I have been more than once compelled to hold my hat firmly on my head lest I should lose it.

After all, it will be a matter of great difficulty to fix the precise causes of the general unhealthiness of Batavia. Its low situation, the adjoining swamps, the moisture of the rice and paddy fields, acted upon by the sun, the nature of the system of gardening with tubs of filth, the vicinity of particular manufactories, the luxuriance of vegetation, and the canals,—all seem insufficient grounds on which to account for the fact,—for a hundred other situations in the island labour under similar disadvantages with impunity. It is a truth known to all the people here, that several parts of the coast of Java are peculiarly inimical to health, while the interior is commonly the reverse; yet the causes usually assigned for the former, must be operating equally alike in the latter: even twenty miles from Batavia the atmosphere is salubrious. What then can be the reason of this difference?—obviously some other agent;—for the vicinity of the sea is most cool, it enjoys the full benefit of the breeze, and in the majority of countries is deemed highly restorative. On the other hand this coast is usually flat, extensive tracts are uncovered at low water, and much of the shore has been gradually gained from the ocean; this is strikingly the case near Batavia; and a peculiar vapour, differing from others in its greater density, is seen to arise and hover over the newly-uncovered land, which requires a brisk wind to disperse. The whole shore of the Bay is nearly in this situation; may not then a peculiarly noxious vapour issue from the recently-gained soil thrown up by slow volcanic means, and thus produce an atmosphere obnoxious to health? Either this is the case, or we must suppose, which is not very probable, that mere evaporation from salt-water marshes is so much more poisonous

than that from fresh; because the latter, at a distance from the coast, are comparatively harmless.

This conjecture is further confirmed by accounts of the shock of an earthquake which occurred here between sixty and seventy years ago, and occasioned much alarm. The bed of the river was raised; a bar, which has since increased, formed at its mouth, and ground gained from the sea: shortly after this, the mortality became truly dreadful. It is remarkable that Banda, and some other islands to the eastward, offer similar phenomena of the destructive effects to human life of a vapour supposed to be volcanic, escaping from the surface of the earth; and several parts of the coast of South America, gained from the recoil of the ocean, are likewise remarkable for unhealthiness. Bantam, in this island, is another example of this peculiarity. Fetid canals are probably but humble assistants in the work of death: the inhabitants firmly believe so; otherwise it is inconceivable that they should not have been long ago filled up; but at any rate, as a measure of cleanliness and convenience, this suggestion, which has been more than once recommended, should now be adopted, sparing perhaps one or two of the principal.

Whatever be the cause of the mortality, there can be no question of the habits of the people aiding the poison of the atmosphere. They eat abundantly of animal food, commonly drowned in butter melted to oil; they delight in hot and hearty suppers, which are indeed the favourite repasts of all classes of the whites; they constantly go to sleep after meals; and sometimes drink freely of beer and spirits to accompany the pipe—the constant companion of almost all their hours, whether occupied in business or pleasure. With such a diet, it is not surprising that many soon die from dysentery, and others linger for months, martyrs to its excruciating pangs. The infatuation for ardent spirits of the soldiers and sailors, principally natives of northern Europe, who came hither in the service of the company, killed thousands; for where this valuable, but imprudent class can get drunk for a penny, which is the case in Batavia, it is in vain to look for forbearance. Eastern sailors are by no means so liable to disease, probably from habitual abstinence. From the same cause, added to the domestic nature of their duties, it is remarkable that women of all classes and colour suffer in an infinitely less proportion than men. I had no means of gaining access to the registers of deaths, but I was informed by one of the inhabitants, that there were distinct gradations in the scale of mortality. The Europeans are of course the principal sufferers, next the creoles and half-casts, and then the Chinese; the Javanese, Malays, Baliers, Buggese,

Amboynese, *cum multis aliis*, with hard names and dingy skins, do not suffer materially; so that the habits and excesses of the whites carry their own punishment. The degree of heat is seldom distressing, the city being cooled by the sea-breeze: in the shade, Fahrenheit's thermometer usually ranges between 80° and 88°. In the rainy season the streets are frequently ankle-deep in water; and toward the conclusion of this period death stalks through them with giant strides. On the whole, however, the mortality is much less than it was thirty years ago; and I have great hopes that, by means of an enlightened English government, and a police, which, to be of any service, must be more than ordinarily strict, it will admit of still greater decrease.

* *Batavia, August.*

While examining, during an excursion, some ruins to which we had insensibly wandered, the place of execution was pointed out at an inconsiderable distance; but this was not a very attractive object of curiosity. According to the Dutch laws, criminals were first tortured to confession, and then sometimes impaled for their discoveries: an English mind, however, revolts from this method of executing the decrees of justice. Impalement was the usual punishment inflicted on murderers, particularly on slaves who had murdered their masters. The Malay race, in whom a violent and sanguinary spirit is said to be inherent, occasionally incurred this dreadful punishment through their excesses in former days: of late, however, the instances are few. One of these people lately suffered death for attempting to destroy the city, after the entrance of the British troops, by exploding a powder-magazine: he was providentially discovered with the match in his hand. A melancholy story was also related to me of a Malay woman of some consequence, who had her son condemned and executed for supposed crimes, in order to gratify the cupidity of her paramour. The wretched woman, distracted by the enormity of her crime, afterwards terminated her existence by poison, confessing her guilt with her latest breath. Cases of this kind, so abhorrent to the general feelings of human nature, are scarcely credible; they serve, however, to mark the disposition of these people, which, for the gratification of the passion for the moment, overleaps every other consideration. But we need not go far for unnatural mothers; the nervous pen of Johnson has recorded, in energetic terms, on an occasion somewhat similar, the conduct of the brutal woman who gave birth to the unfortunate poet, *Savage*.

Returning to a house where a dinner had been prepared for

us, it was a relief to throw off the restraints of a formal dress. In English India this is often the case in familiar parties: the ardour of a tropical sun, its feverish excitement, and relaxing lassitude, the throbbing pulses, and the perspiration streaming from every pore, may lead to an estimate of the comforts it bestows. In Batavia the custom is still more general: the guests disrobe, except on very formal occasions, immediately after the first ceremonies; and are supplied not only with light clothing, but those who wear wigs receive the additional accommodation of that material item in the fashionable apparel of the inhabitants—a night-cap. When it is time to retire, each resumes his proper habiliments; and, in the mean time, couches placed in the hall give visitors an opportunity of reclining at their ease, and of being fanned by several sable attendants.

The majority of families reside on the ground-floor, in a kind of open apartment at the end of the hall, of which it is, indeed, simply an expansion. It is commonly spacious and cool, being either tiled or flagged, and open to the breeze; and here the family sit at table, receive their friends, and frequently sleep. Unseasonable visitors seem not to be expected; for there is little or no hindrance to their ingress at all times, the doors being kept open for the benefit of the air. A staircase, which, as well as the wainscoting, and indeed almost every part of the interior, is painted brown, leads to the upper apartments; these are sufficiently, though cumbrously furnished, the glasses, mirrors, couches, chairs, and tables, being seemingly as ancient as the foundation of the city. In a Dutch house it is scarcely necessary to remark that the general appearance is neat: an Englishman, however, is apt to complain that many comforts are wanting. The apartments of the slaves, the cook-rooms, pantries, and other appendages to housewifery, occupy the yard.

Dinner was served up about three o'clock; it consisted of a variety of made-dishes, hashes, stews, and a curry. The French are said to make a dish out of any thing: the Batavians deserve almost equal credit. It defied all my ingenuity to discover the names or composition of half those on the table; but it was still more provoking to find very few adapted to the keen texture of our stomachs. Some were sweet, others sour, or bitter, or envelopped in butter reduced to oil, and seasoned with garlic, the latter being a particular favourite with the ladies, and, though said to be conducive to health, certainly not any addition to their charms. It was needless to look for a plain, solid, ungarnished joint; beef, mutton, and poultry, were so hacked and hewed, and drowned in sauce, that it was difficult to tell to which animal they had originally belonged. A plate of rice,

placed by each guest, served the double purpose of vegetables and bread, the latter, as we were told, not being procurable. Both sexes use their fingers in eating the rice; a knife and fork, in our landlord's opinion, were unnecessary and useless refinements—almost as bad as the Chinese chop-sticks—for the implements furnished by nature were in every respect better adapted to save time and trouble.

Seeing the dishes cleared away, and our host deliberately retiring to his afternoon's repose, without replenishing the vacant board with bottles,—we ventured to inquire for wine—he seemed surprised—said that few in town except the most wealthy possessed such an article—it was at least five Spanish dollars a bottle,—European spirits were equally dear;—and, by way of illustrating his assertion, added—and called a Dutch officer present to bear witness to the fact—that the commandant of a battalion could not afford to drink brandy and water. Some fine old arrack, however, formed a substitute. This spirit is by no means indifferent, when mellowed by age;—that of Batavia is celebrated throughout the East for its excellence, but, like a prophet in his own country, little admired at home by those who can afford to procure any other. The distilleries, like all other arts and manufactures in the island, are in the hands of the Chinese.

In the evening we drove out to the suburbs in a Batavian carriage—a vehicle drawn by two horses, and in shape somewhat resembling a clumsy curricule. All the coachmen are Malays; the horses, though small, are very spirited, and often so perverse or timid in harness, as to require an attendant to lead them; more than once did our Jchu alight to sooth and encourage his fretful cattle, for the whip seldom had effect.

I was highly pleased with the excursion. The villas, the gardens, the groves, the streams, the roads, the lively hue of vegetation, ever young, and almost visibly bounding out of the bosom of the earth, were enchanting. Nature seemed to have combined her attractions here, chastened, and pruned, and regulated by art. All my native prejudices vanished in a moment: though attached to the scenery of Europe, I could not imagine any thing more beautiful than this, or a spot more enviable to reside in, were it only free from the baleful influence of disease. Garden-reach, near Calcutta, I understand, offers a style of beauty something similar. Notwithstanding the bounty of nature, I do not, however, implicitly subscribe to the taste of the people; the habitations, though neat and pretty, are not decorated with the happiest efforts of art; nor are the gardens and planting in the style we admire; but these are petty blemishes, quite absorbed in the profusion of beauties,

It was remarked by one of the party, that it might be mistaken for fairy-ground; the houses for enchanted castles; and disease and death for the hideous monsters which are usually represented to guard them. To pursue the metaphor, I may add that the whole is a grand deception of nature—a species of conspiracy against the life of man,—for its meretricious ornaments tempt only to mislead him, and allure but to destroy.

The gardens, at least those destined for the immediate supply of the table, seem attended with uncommon care: the soil, which is luxuriant and productive, furnishes all that can satisfy the palate, or delight the sense. We saw several of the wealthier inhabitants, for their amusement, hard at work with the watering-pot and spade, accoutred in the prevailing costume of night-caps and dressing-gowns; and, when the heat will permit, this is at all times a favourite occupation. Many slaves were likewise at work, drawing water from the canals, by means of buckets from a stage fixed on the bank. This is again distributed through the grounds, either by channels cut for the purpose, or by spouts formed by sections of the bamboo.

Of the fruits produced in these gardens, there is almost an endless variety, all that are peculiar to the tropics, and others rarely found elsewhere belonging to this island. All, however, are not esteemed equally wholesome; a Batavian is often as particular in the choice of his fruit, as an Englishman in that of his wine; for some kinds, among which are the pine, cocoanut, and several others, frequently bring on severe bowel-complaints. On the contrary, the shadoc, orange, and mango, bear the character of being healthful; and the rind of the latter is often used with good effect in dysentery. The celebrated mangosteen, considered the most delicious fruit with which we are acquainted, will not be in season till November; like the shadoc, it is supposed to attain great excellence here; and a friend, who was for many months detained prisoner in the neighbourhood of the city, attributed the preservation of his life, in a severe attack of disease, to the frequent use of this fruit.

Two beautiful roads, east and west, planted with spreading trees, and gaily setting off the habitations in their vicinity, lead to Weltevreden, a military post rather than a village, having very few civilians for inhabitants. Here, the ground being more elevated than the city, and consequently esteemed more healthy, were stationed the barracks, hospitals, ordnance, and quarters for the officers. An extensive range of buildings, including, among others, better accommodations for the troops, remain unfinished. One of these, it was said, was meant for a new mansion for the governor-general; the present one is not far distant, near the Jacatra road; and here, in the prosperous days of

Batavia, this important personage received visitors, gave audiences and parties, stationed his guards, and preserved all the formal pomp of a true Asiatic sovereign. Buitenzorg, to which the shattered remnant of the enemy's forces retreated, after the defeat at Cornelis, was likewise a favourite residence of the governors-general, and either is, or was intended, to be fortified as strongly as the latter post. All the avenues to the interior were to be completely closed against an enemy. Many of the principal people, also, resorted thither from the fatigues and deleterious air of the city; for its scenery, no less than its salubrity, rendered it the amusement of the gay, the recreation of the idle, and the delight of the sick, who inhaled the reviving air of the mountains in the vicinity.

We had occasion to pass near the gréat Chinese Cemetery, always a matter of curiosity to strangers, from the religious veneration of this people toward the tombs of their ancestors. These are a species of vaults somewhat raised from the surrounding ground, and covered by green sod, or by stones marked with various characters or hieroglyphics; many are decorated, and some are said to have lamps burning within, as an additional mark of respect to the departed. Once a year, these sepulchral monuments are visited by the surviving relatives, who strew flowers around them, invoke the care and protection of the deceased, and, still further to propitiate their good offices, leave, for their use, food, upon which some of the living, less devoutly inclined, sometimes take the liberty of feasting. Notwithstanding the folly, or superstition, of these ceremonies, there is something amiable in these tokens of affectionate regard to the memory of departed friends. It is to them a species of posthumous fame;—it at least bears the semblance of gratitude to those from whom we have received our being, and from whom we cannot receive any more worldly favours. In Europe, the dust that covers the grave seems to obliterate not only the name, but the sense of obligations due to departed relatives.

Batavia, I need scarcely observe, possesses a vast variety of inhabitants, consisting of people from Europe and from the east—from the south, and from the west. The great majority of the former are, or (I should say) have been, Dutch; to which I may add, the new importations of French, several Germans, and a few stray Englishmen, Danes, and Americans: but the number of adventurers has much declined of late years. The bastard-Portuguese, well known in all the settlements in India, and scarcely a remove from the natives in colour, likewise constitute a considerable class. These, with the intermixture of the whites, the creoles, the half-casts—the illegitimate offspring of all, with the native women—the yellow, the brown, and the blue—form an indescribable jumble of the class which lays

claim to the enviable title of whites. Add to this medley, the Chinese, Malays, Javanese, strangers from all the other islands, Indians, and Africans—Jews, Turks, Armenians, and Pagans—every gradation in pedigree, and a greater variety of hues and shades than are to be found in all the admixtures of one of Ackerman's colour-boxes—and you may have a faint idea of the motley population of this capital.

Few of the more opulent whites reside at any time in the city, preferring the environs, though they meet there at occasional parties. Their manners are said to be formal: there is no want of cordiality, however, where the difference of ranks is not very considerable. Public amusements, if I except the evening drive, are unknown: there seems to have existed no general feeling among the people to rejoice together—none of that genial warmth, and benevolence of temperament, which derive their highest gratification from witnessing the pleasure of others. I cannot conceive for what reason the heroes of the sock and buskin should be unknown here, whether from the coldness of the national character—want of taste—local policy—inconvenience of public assemblages—or some supposed injury to health: this, however, is the case. Private balls are not unfrequent, but none of a public nature are countenanced. And when, in select parties, the sexes are summoned together to enjoy the “flow of soul” which characterizes their assemblages in all other countries, they but meet here to separate, the gentlemen retiring to one room, the ladies to another, where the former smoke and drink, and the latter chew areca, or take coffee.

Batavia, no doubt, possesses many well-informed men, who, born in Europe, have found their way hither to fill civil and military offices; and also, perhaps, a few natives sent thither for education. But the great majority of what are called the burgher class, bear a very different character. Not any tolerable school exists for the education of youth: a public establishment of this description was once attempted, but failed. Few natives in consequence occupy professional situations. Divinity, physic, law, and the minor offices of the state, require to be supplied from other sources; and such has been the paucity of good materials, or so unfortunate the selection, that many of the most incapable and uneducated persons were frequently chosen to fill them. It may be worthy of remark, that the general decline of the island has kept pace with the unenlightened state of the population. So it is likewise in the Portuguese settlements in this country. A few able men from Europe, in the higher situations of government, cannot expand the mind, or enlighten the intellect of the inferior officers, on whom must principally depend the due administration of the laws, and the consequent

comforts and prosperity of the mass of the people. English India, by its greater excellence in this respect, unquestionably claims its superiority in every other. Society here will not, of course, be very entertaining to our countrymen. The men rise at an early hour, take a dram, or coffee, or perhaps both; breakfast between eight and nine, and transact business till one, when they dine, and then indulge for a few hours in repose. In the evening they drive about, pay visits, smoke, and drink beer or spirits in the open air, sup heartily between nine and ten, and retire directly to bed, in order to recruit for the fatigues of the ensuing day.

I regret much my not having had an opportunity of being in company with the softer sex. Circumstances indeed rendered this impossible. I have scarcely seen more than a dozen of the respectable class during our stay, for, with an enemy at their doors, and the paraphernalia of war before their eyes, it is not surprising that they should keep sedulously secluded. Thirst having one day led me to a respectable house to request water, at the further end of the hall three young females caught my eye; they at first precipitately retreated, but, recovering from their surprise, soon returned to gain a better view of the *Englander*, who, equally curious, paid them all the homage of his eyes in return. They seemed delicately formed, their complexions sallow, and their hair black and luxuriant. They were very loosely and negligently attired, which is the universal morning costume of the island. In the evening, when engaged to parties, they dress expensively in all the silks, muslins, and precious stones of the east; wreaths of jewels and flowers ornament the head; and the hair is commonly imbued with a large proportion of cocoa-nut oil, the odour of which is not the most agreeable. Many chew the areca-nut and betel-leaf; others smoke. These, and some other peculiarities, are borrowed from the customs of the Malay women, whom they seem to imitate more than those of Europe. They are accused of being vein, indolent, fond of show and ceremony, and, having little or no education, are necessarily deficient in one great source of attraction to the other sex. Much of their time is passed with the female slaves, several of whom are tutored in music and other accomplishments, which with us are only taught to the mistress: but the Asiatic female, too proud or petulant to submit herself to the drudgery of learning, acquires and exhibits them only by deputy. Few, except the wives of the principal officers, come hither from Europe; for the Batavians have not yet discovered, or duly appreciated, the benefit of those annual importations of beauty so useful and ornamental to English India. Between stragglers of this description, and the

native ladies, some degree of jealousy commonly exists, the latter regarding their superior attainments with an unfavourable eye. Should the former chance to commit a *faux pas*, which now and then, it seems, occurs, the triumph of their adversaries is unbounded.

Cheribon, September.

Having embarked the marines of his majesty's ship *Lion*, and being accompanied by our former consorts, the *President* and *Phoebe* frigates, we quitted Batavia Roads for Cheribon. Colonel Wood, who commanded a brigade at the storming of Cornelis, Captain Robinson, an agent from Lord Minto to the native chiefs, and the resident, likewise embarked with us. A battalion of sepoys, under the orders of the former, was intended to strengthen our force; these, however, could not be embarked in due time, and were, therefore, ordered to follow in transports. On the morning of the 4th of September, we discovered the town, a pretty looking place from the sea: the fort presented an imposing appearance, and French colours were flying, but there was no attempt to fire. Immediately after anchoring, which was within long-gun-shot of the shore, Captain Warren, of the *President*, was dispatched with a flag of truce to summon the commandant to surrender; while, in the mean time, we prepared for action; but this proved unnecessary, for, after an hour's deliberation, the tri-coloured flag came down, and was replaced by that of England. The marines were immediately disembarked for the purpose of securing the new acquisition: scarcely, however, had they formed on the beach, when a rumour was brought of a large body of the enemy entering the town. It was but the work of an instant to charge through it; several prisoners were secured, among others, General Jumel, second-in-command to Janssen, Colonel Knotzer, aid-de-camp to the latter, but from whom he had been separated after the discomfiture at Cornelis, a subaltern officer, and a few attendants, who, for their better security, were directly brought on-board the *Nisus*. This gave us an opportunity of hearing some further particulars of the retreat, from the colonel, a fine young man, a native of Holland, who, to a very interesting countenance, added the further recommendation of speaking good English.

It appeared that after the disastrous termination of the battle, the general, who narrowly escaped from it with the loss of his hat, sword, and horse, and avoided capture only by temporary concealment, proceeded to Buitenzorg. Here he attempted to organize the stragglers, though without much success; for the Malays, tired of fighting, refused obedience to their officers; some openly mutinied, while others dispersed in bands for the

purposes of plunder. With the few detachments, therefore, who continued faithful, he quitted that place shortly before the entry of the British cavalry, to join the governor at Samarang, and had just got thus far on his way thither. He had seen the flag-of-truce, but did not believe we occupied the town; and, calculating on being enabled to reconnoitre unobserved, had unexpectedly fallen into our hands. This place lies in the great military road, leading eastward from Batavia, by which all intercourse is carried on between the opposite ends of the island; and, had the winds proved favourable, we might have arrived here in sufficient time to intercept the governor himself, who passed through the town the preceding day.

Cheribon is one of the most considerable of the chain of towns lining the whole of the north coast of the island. It was the capital of a kingdom of the same name, tributary to the emperor of Java, who, about the year 1680, made over the sovereignty to the Dutch, allowing the native princes to retain a nominal authority, which has gradually dwindled to nothing, and the persons who exercise it to the condition nearly of mendicants. They did not always, however, submit quietly to this degradation, for it appears that several have been banished at different times for disobedience. At present two or three royal personages, in rags, reside in the vicinity, one of whom, though destitute of power, of wealth, or of influence, except what the voluntary feelings of the natives may prompt them to allow, still clings warmly to the title of Sultan; and though the Europeans very respectfully give him this appellation, they take care to give nothing else. The distance of Cheribon from Batavia, by the great road, which here, for the first time, arrives at the coast after running through the mountains, may be about 170 miles: by the coast it is much less. The adjoining country, watered by several rivulets, is fruitful in rice, coffee, cotton, sugar, areca-nut, and a small proportion of pepper, which find a ready vent, by means of small coasters.

The town is situated close to the sea, on ground which retains some traces of having been swampy, but, rising in the rear, becomes enveloped in trees. To the right and left are several salt-pans, where that useful article is collected; farther in the rear, and on the right, is Cheribon mountain, formerly a volcano, according to tradition, and a distinguishing land-mark for vessels. Thunder-storms are frequent here. During their prevalence, the top of the mountain is constantly illuminated by flashes of lightning, the clouds condense round it, and descend in torrents of rain, smoke seems to issue from its summit, and the thunder rolls directly over the heads of the terrified natives, who, in dread of being destroyed by the mighty, but invisible

power directing the warring elements, pray fervently toward the scene of their contention. One of these awful phenomena has occurred since our arrival. It came on in the evening, after an unusually scorching day: the glare of ghastly light around the horizon was indescribable; the rain appeared like the discharge from a water-spout; a gust of whirlwind twirled the ship around, threatening to carry her from her anchors; and, at intervals, the mountain, wrapped in the elemental fire, exhibited a spectacle, which, in the minds of the simple natives, might well excite feelings of religious veneration.

The extent of Cheribon is much greater than, from a transient view, might be supposed, and the population is likewise more considerable: the streets are numerous, but narrow. In the outskirts particularly, a stranger is often at a loss to discover whence the people issue, involved as the habitations of the Javanese are, in clumps of trees, bushes, and underwood, fenced off by branches, and covered with leaves. Yet, from these humble abodes, into which a breath of air never seems to penetrate, and in which the human form has scarcely room to extend itself at length, sally out broods of young black urchins, the pictures of health and vivacity, naked as they came into the world, their wants comprised in the cocoa-nut, and a little rice, and their only dread—a white face.

The Chinese occupy the centre of the town, and toward the fort; their houses are much superior, and their shops numerous: the latter abound in the same kinds of merchandize as those at Batavia, consisting of tea, coffee, sugar-candy, sweetmeats, and a profusion of party-coloured wax-candles. The principal trade is in their hands here, as well as in other places, it being carried on with the capital, and with Samarang, in vessels of about thirty tons burthen, for the accommodation of which a pier has been constructed, and a small river widened into a canal. The former is at present nearly in ruins, and the latter so cloaked with mud that a boat cannot go up at low-water, though with attention it might be rendered sufficiently commodious. The bay, or road, where large ships anchor, is of such small depth, that the frigates are nearly a mile-and-a-half from the shore. It is protected by a long flat of mud and sand, jutting to the eastward from the western part of the bay: within this ships are pretty secure, except when it blows strong from the eastward.

Not more than a dozen Europeans reside in the town and vicinity, and these were principally in the service of government. The half-cast class are considerably more numerous: they are either engaged in trade, in the minor situations of authority, in the collection of the revenue, or as brokers and interpreters for others. Some of their houses are fine; and, along with these,

are several extensive storehouses for receiving the produce of the lands; but many appear verging to decay, Cheribon having fallen off in the importance it formerly enjoyed. The Land-roost, or Resident, who in this island is a personage of the first importance, and, in fact, almost absolute in his district, has an elegant house to the right of the fort, adorned with ponds, statues, a grove, and an avenue of trees, which set it off to great advantage. The owner is at present absent: his house, however, forms the head-quarters of the detachment; and a plentiful table alleviates the fatigues of duty.

The fort, though not strong, has a respectable and neat exterior, but is within in the most abominably filthy state that can be conceived. On first entering it, several of our men were compelled precipitately to retire, being seized with a violent head-ache and nausea. Every species of filth, scraped from every quarter for years—I had almost said centuries—seemed piled and preserved with a more than religious veneration. I am only astonished it did not induce pestilence; but, in fact, such a scourge did rage here some years ago, and destroyed some hundreds of inhabitants. It was attributed to various causes, but probably not to the right one. Though daily undergoing a state of purgation by the seamen, I was compelled to hold my nose a week after it had been in our possession. The number of guns mounted is twenty-two, six and four-pounders, several of which totter upon rotten carriages: others, tired of their crazy supports, have found a firmer bed on the walls, and will not of course give much interruption to an enemy. A ditch, wet at high-water, surrounds it; and over this is a draw-bridge leading through the only gate: these are effectual securities against the natives. Among other recesses discovered in this temple of the dirty deities, were several dungeons, which, on being examined, disclosed a few wretched prisoners, who had been immured here for years, and who were now brought forth to gaze again upon human countenances, from which they had been long estranged. Some of these miserable objects were old and decrepid from the length of their imprisonment; and one particularly, by his age and beard, brought to remembrance the venerable figure recorded to have been rescued from the dungeons of the Bastile: these men, however, had forfeited their lives to the laws. Notwithstanding their crimes, compassion strongly interceded for remission of the punishment, and the appeal was not made to British bosoms in vain. But nature was exhausted;—the lamp of life had burned to the socket—it revived for a moment—fluttered—again gleamed, and finally sank for ever. In fact, the restoration to light and liberty proved too much for the debilitated frame, and two of these unfortunates expired soon after their release.

The duty of garrisoning the fort fell to the lot of the seamen, who seemed highly amused by their new occupation; while the marines kept on the alert to seize stragglers belonging to the enemy. These, ignorant of the town having changed masters, or-willing to terminate their fatigues by quietly surrendering, were continually coming in—soldiers without discipline, arms, or officers—officers without orders or information,—so that alarms occurred every hour. On one occasion, a more than ordinary sensation was excited by the approach of a large body of armed men, whooping and shouting in unison with discordant music: it was difficult to tell whether they were coming as the ambassadors of peace, or the emissaries of war; the troops therefore drew up to answer either exigency, as might happen, when it was discovered to be a complimentary visit from the native chiefs, or sultans, as they are sometimes called, already mentioned as being the legitimate heirs to the sovereign authority of Cheribon. They were distinguished from their attentive but noisy subjects, principally by scarlet robes, ornamented with gold; the handles and scabbards of their *kreeses*, or daggers, were likewise formed of the same metal, and carved with a variety of figures, displaying infinite industry, though not much elegance, in the native artists.

The princes appearing somewhat ceremonious, were received with all imaginable form, and the usual display of military honours, by Captain Beaver, and the other officers of the squadron. They were happy, they said, to see their friends the English, of whose success they had often heard, and for whose presence they had been anxious: they promised likewise to furnish supplies, and contribute their exertions in bringing the surrounding country under our authority. In this, considering the little attention paid them by the Dutch, they were probably in earnest. For this visit we were partly indebted to an ancient grim-looking chief, who, having been in disgrace with the Dutch, had been detained at Batavia, and, on the sailing of our little expedition, was sent on-board by Lord Minto to introduce it to the good opinion of the natives. He wrote the Malay language, not a very common accomplishment of the Javanese, fluently, and seemed of some consequence. But time, assisted either by opium or arrack, had given him such an unprepossessing countenance, that, with a little dressing, it might have passed for that of Medusa; and the addition of a red jacket, and military hat, given him by one of the officers, and of which he seemed not a little proud, by no means tended to increase its beauty.

Cheribon, September.

The town being now secure from molestation, it was determined to push forward a party to the village of *Karang Sambang*, on the road to Batavia. Here a considerable body of the enemy was said to have taken post, unable either to advance to Cheribon, or to retreat, without meeting the English troops, in pursuit from Buitenzorg. The military chest of the army was also said to be in their possession; and the village contained several extensive magazines of produce, which it was feared might be destroyed, this having hitherto been the constant practice of the enemy. Preparations were therefore made to attack their position; and for this purpose a body of 150 marines and 70 seamen, to which I was attached, was ordered to march in the evening.

About five o'clock we quitted Cheribon, the majority of the party being mounted; while others, after having been repeatedly unhorsed, deserted their unruly steeds with hearty curses, preferring the alternative of trudging under the weight of their accoutrements on foot. The night proved fine; the moon for a time shone brilliantly over a rich and fruitful country, as we could distinguish from the road, which is itself of the finest description; and the inhabitants of numerous villages poured out of their huts in crowds, astonished, but not dismayed, at their repose being disturbed by the intrusion of so many armed men. I was somewhat surprised to find several of the marines seized with that temporary defective vision, termed *nyctalopia*, or night-blindness, which is not uncommon within the tropics. The attack was sudden; vision seldom became totally obscured, but so indistinct, that the shape of objects could not be distinguished, and in this situation the men were obliged to be led. With some it lasted more than an hour; with others, not more than ten or twenty minutes; but on the approach of day all were effectually cured. They themselves attributed it to the effects of the moon, which, however, had disappeared previously to the attack: I did not observe any peculiarity in the atmosphere or in the men: for the weak and the strong, the dark-complexioned and the fair, suffered alike: none of the officers, however, experienced it. Before Cornelis, the working detachments suffered considerably from this annoying complaint.

A variety of alarms occurred on the road, and many stragglers of the enemy were seized, and either disarmed and dismissed, or sent to the rear. But just as the moon had declined, and we were left in utter darkness to guess at objects, a glare of torches became visible through the woods, at the turning of the road, accompanied by a confused noise of people, and the clattering of horses and wheels. We halted for a moment to assume the

defensive. At a distance, the cavalcade strikingly reminded me of the funeral procession in *Don Quixote*; and our threatening attitude promised even greater havoc than the mad knight's attack upon the harmless friars. The party, however, proved to be some families travelling in the direction of Cheribon, and who, after answering a few questions, quietly proceeded on their way. They were dreadfully alarmed; and whether "pale fear" or the climate had blanched their cheeks, the torch-light shed a ghastly glare over the countenances of chalky, or rather yellow-coloured men, brown women, and dingy children, so as to make them appear more like inhabitants of the other world than of this.

At the end of about seven hours' march we entered the village of Bongas, or Bonghaz. Here an advanced division of the enemy was understood to be posted; and the horsemen of our party, joining their comrades on foot, formed into two divisions, entering the place with the utmost secrecy; but, upon examination, the bird had flown, carrying away, as the natives said, the chest of specie, of which we had been in anxious search, and leaving behind only a few waggons of copper currency in the form of ingots, but of so little value in the island, as to have been fired as grape-shot from Cornelis. Bonghaz being merely a station for travellers, contains only a few huts, from which we got refreshments of rice and tea. I ought to remark, perhaps, that we had been several times refreshed on the road by this favourite beverage; so that it would appear to be in as great request in a Javanese, as in an English village.

The men having been refreshed by a few hours' rest, we resumed our march before day-break, a party being detached to escort the waggons to Cheribon. Several attempts had been hitherto made to convert our battalion of foot into cavalry, but in vain; and now, when fatigue rendered all desirous to make the attempt again, many of the horses were missing. This, at first, threatened to be a serious loss; but several of the stragglers being caught in the fields, were given to the most wearied, who, in imitation of the good old country custom of *ride and tye*, were to dismount occasionally for the accommodation of others. We set off, therefore, in high spirits; the sun soon became fiery, and some distress was occasioned by the want of water, there being only certain places where this indispensable article could be procured without considerable delay and inconvenience. But just about this time an enemy's officer appeared, bearing a flag of truce, with proposals for surrender: two of our party were sent forward to settle the terms, and the object of the expedition was thus likely to be gained without a contest.

Between Bonghaz and Karang Sambang there are only two regular watering places, from one of which, our principal guide

and interpreter, who had entered the house, returned with an exclamation of surprise, to say that he could not make the people understand, as they did not speak the Malay tongue, but to use his phraseology, only Javans. This is a striking peculiarity of the Eastern islands. Toward the coast, all classes, natives as well as others, converse in the former, which is the common dialect of the whole, in their intercourse with strangers; but in the interior, on the contrary, is commonly found a language of their own, differing, in many respects, from that which custom has naturalized on the sea-coast.

Few habitations enliven this part of the road, which, for several miles, seemed quite deserted: at a distance we could occasionally distinguish native villages. Beyond the second watering place, where an awning gives temporary protection from the sun to weary passengers and their beasts, the road enters a wood of a curious description; for the trees, though thickly planted, being destitute of leaves, or small branches, afford no shelter. Some had been evidently fired, others were decayed; but the great majority deprived of the active principle of vegetation, presented the figure of lifeless trunks prematurely blasted by lightning. The reader may, probably, bring to remembrance the famous fable of the Bohun Upas tree, exhaling poison to the winds, and death to all animate and inanimate nature exposed to its influence. Such would have been our idea at the moment, could we have forgotten that it was fiction. There was, indeed, a tolerable field here for the imagination to sport in; for we are naturally so fond of the marvellous, that, had not the heat and long marching been so provokingly obvious in producing exhaustion in the men, it might have been attributed, as well as the withered forest, to the effects of the poison-tree. Beyond this there were many pretty views, though without that diversity which forms the soul of European landscape. The distant prospect was commonly fine; more at hand it appeared less pleasing; now and then we caught a glimpse of a mountain half enveloped in blue haze, skirting the widest range of the horizon; and sometimes meadow-lands intermixed with cultivated rice-fields.

The effect of the flag of truce on the animal powers of the detachment, was strikingly illustrative of the state of men's minds engaged in enterprize. While expecting to meet an enemy, the weakest, who could scarcely totter under their arms, felt bound to exert all their vigour for the contest; but when the stimulus was gone, the sensation of languor and fatigue became irresistible. The *vis animæ* of the animal had quite evaporated; it no longer supported his frame, or called his energies into action: he might be said to have sunk, like his horse, almost to

a mere machine. Several of the poor fellows were reeling under the effects of vertigo, and I every moment expected some to drop from a *coup de soleil*; a few experienced effusions of blood from the nose. Want of water proved a severe privation; extreme thirst called for incessant draughts; and these were not always to be procured, the supply in the canteens becoming, in a few minutes, unfit for use through heat. Want of ardent spirits was a still greater loss; but a bottle or two, accidentally preserved in my vehicle by some of the officers, when distributed, had the best effects. The alteration, indeed, was altogether surprising; for the lame and exhausted, at the talismanic touch of this cordial, became again active. I never before had half so good an opinion of the invigorating influence of the dram-bottle; and I may now safely pronounce it a sovereign panacea on a march.

About two o'clock we took quiet possession of Karang Sambang: the numbers of the enemy more than doubled our own; their arms were piled on the road as we entered; and, on being drawn up for inspection, we were surprised to find nearly sixty European officers attached to the party. A major of cavalry, named Le Blanc, with a small body of men, had fallen back on Samadang, a village about twenty miles distant, the preceding evening. We could not, however, gain any other intelligence of the reported chest of specie, than a vague statement that the sum, if any, was trifling, and had been either distributed among his men, or to the native chiefs, to purchase a temporary safety; for these, on being convinced of the success of our arms, had, along with the straggling black soldiers, turned their vengeance against their former masters, and massacred several officers. I saw one afterwards who had been nearly cut to pieces by the Malays, with a weapon in use among them shaped like a chopper: he still survived, but in a most wretched condition. At Samadang, a strong escort was required to be enabled to quit their quarters for the purpose of procuring daily supplies of food.

Karang Sambang is a pretty village, situated in a country which, were it to possess an industrious population, and a good government, would be one of the most productive, as it is one of the finest in the world. Notwithstanding a system of exaction, however, by both chiefs and Europeans, it is still rich in the two essential articles of rice and coffee. The district does not want for inhabitants;—it is open and well watered: much of the scenery in the neighbourhood is picturesque; and, as it lies in the great road to the capital, it has the benefit of continual intercourse with the coast and the interior. The village itself does not contain many habitations, though scattered

over some extent of ground. Through the centre of it runs a broad and rapid river, falling into the sea to the westward of Cheribon, but the navigation of which is partly obstructed by mud-banks, on which small alligators are often seen basking in the sun: these, however, were not formidable enough to venture to interrupt our men in the exercise of bathing. Over it is a wooden bridge of considerable length, the interstices between the timbers of which being filled with split reeds and bamboos, make a stranger sometimes tremble for his footing. On the left bank we found several stores of rice, collected for government by the local authorities. Java is rich in this favourite article of eastern food, the quality being excellent, and the crop seldom failing. As the superabundance is considerable, after the wants of the people are supplied, it may become, perhaps, a valuable storehouse to British India, in case of the recurrence of those dreadful famines which have more than once desolated some of its most populous provinces.

About a mile from these stores, and adjoining the house of the resident agent of government, were two very large depôts of coffee, containing, as he informed us, 82,000 picols, or ten millions two hundred and fifty thousand pounds weight. This he estimated, at the lowest possible value, to be worth 350,000 Spanish dollars; and, at a fair price, it ought to produce half-a-million—a very comfortable assurance, it will be said, for keen cruisers after prize-money. A picol was exacted from the natives, at the rate of one hundred and sixty-five pounds weight, but sold again at only one hundred and twenty-five pounds; it was bought, likewise, for six or seven dollars; and, notwithstanding the deduction in quantity, retailed, in the more prosperous days of Java, for twenty-five. Pepper, from Bantam, was procured in a similar manner, and sold at a profit much more enormous: other produce was rated equally high. The native sovereigns, however independent in name, were never suffered to trade with strangers: this constituted the leading article in every treaty; it became a necessary condition of their existence; and it likewise answered the double purpose of excluding foreigners from fomenting disturbances, to the disadvantage of the Dutch, and securing the produce of the soil at their own prices. It is also true, however, that much of the profit of these transactions accrued, not to the government, but to its servants, who, as individual interests are more keenly followed than those of the public, were not very delicate or conscientious in the pursuit, though the odium was commonly thrown upon their employers.

Having secured the prisoners, we proceeded to the house of the resident, who, it appeared, was a deputy from his superior

in Cheribon. Mynheer Swaluc, for that was his name, received us with as many professions of civility, as a body of armed men could reasonably expect, who had it in their own power to make themselves welcome. He is a thin man, with a long, and not a very pleasant, visage; about eleven years ago he quitted, in poverty, the marshes of East Friesland, to seek for wealth in those of Java; and if he has succeeded in this object, seems, likewise, to have paid the usual tax for it, that of being a sufferer by disease. I do not know whether his situation here is very lucrative; but, as resident, the chiefs bow to his authority with implicit submission. He is the general agent as well as magistrate; he inspects the state of the country, levies imposts, collects and stores the produce, issues orders for requisitions of cattle, provisions, and men, on emergency, and all this is quietly effected by the mere authority of his name, without the intervention of soldiers—a mode, no doubt, embracing much practical wisdom. It is also a proof of the people being disciplined, in the duties of good order and submission, rather more than we should expect, considering the occasional contending interests of chiefs, both native and foreign.

The house of the resident is prettily situated, on ground slightly elevated, surrounded by woods and gardens: in front runs an arm of the river, a smooth and placid stream answering to the tranquillity which seems to characterize the spot. Over this the conveyance is a raft, or stage, fixed on a double canoe; and, a rope being permanently made fast across the river, the person who embarks by this means drags himself over without the assistance of rowers. A small fort in bad repair, and offices, besides the depôts of produce before-mentioned, adjoin the house. Finding that our small party would not inconvenience the owner for a short period, and in fact not meeting with any other abode, this became our head-quarters. We were not of that species of travellers who require the most luxurious accommodations. A few chairs formed our beds: our appetites were likewise keen enough to feast upon any substantial dish, however homely; and, to do our host justice, he was not altogether a niggard of his good things, particularly when it was intimated that government would repay all the expences incurred by the detachment. This pledge (we could scarcely credit it!) even produced two or three dozen of tolerable Madeira from his cellar, to which we did not fail doing ample justice; but Mynheer, like a careful landlord, not to lose the opportunity of making a good bill, has already, we understand, given in the consumption at eight or ten dozen.

The economy of the table, which, as domestic customs familiarize us most with the people, I shall make no apology for

again adverting to, differed no otherwise from those we had seen in Batavia, than in being less overwhelmed in floods of oily sauces. Rice seemed as great a favourite here as in the capital, and bread was equally scarce: throughout the Island indeed wheat would appear either to be little cultivated, or, little esteemed; a solitary two-penny loaf formed the whole stock of the family during our stay. On the contrary, rice, by the eagerness with which it is sought and used by all classes of the people, would seem to constitute their bread, beef, and wine united. So far India and Europe differ; and, notwithstanding the precipitate opinions apt to be formed by strangers, both are doubtless wisely given by nature to the people and countries to which they are best suited. Coffee, according to universal custom, appeared at day-light, and, though to me a novel enjoyment at that hour, proved a most agreeable one: I think it might safely bear transplantation to the English settlements. Breakfast came on table at nine o'clock, dinner at two, tea at six, and supper at nine. The intervals were employed by our host, as well as by some of his friends then on a visit, in that first of luxuries in their opinion, and the general occupation of all Europeans settled here—smoking. This is followed with a perseverance that would seem to constitute it a duty rather than a recreation—a kind of natural function going on like respiration, or the circulation of the blood, almost involuntarily:—I have seen it continued for six hours without intermission: so natural, indeed, does the operation appear to the mouth of a true Hollander, that I would almost as soon expect to see his nose discarded from his face, as the pipe or cigar. Even the hours usually appropriated to sleep by others, seem here to feel the prevailing influence of the “herb of thoughtfulness.”—A lighted candle, and a bundle of cigars, form as regular a part of the chamber furniture as the bed; and the ardent votary of tobacco, while under the influence of a half slumber, may, by a little practice, enjoy at the same moment the still greater pleasure of a whiff.

Once or twice, during our stay here, we were visited by a chief, without parade, and with only a few attendants, from whom he was principally distinguished in dress by his krees and turban. A mistake of ours had nearly cost him his life; for, passing close to a centinel, he was suspected of being an enemy's vidette reconnoitering, and becoming alarmed when summoned, fled, and was fired at, though fortunately without effect. A summons had been previously sent to the French commandant at Samadang; to which the principal chief added a message, that as further resistance was useless, if he did not immediately give peace to the campongs, (districts, or

rather villages,) by surrendering, he would march five thousand men against him, and in that case would not answer for the life of a single soldier. This threat had the desired effect: next day Major Le Blanc, who had escaped from Cornelis, and was, I believe, principal cavalry-officer, came in with his party, and brought, with him a lieutenant-colonel, likewise a fugitive from the wreck of their army on the same disastrous occasion.

An express now arriving that the battalion of sepoys expected from Batavia had landed to garrison Cheribon, our little amphibious army prepared to return to its proper element. A curious illustration of the nature of the resident's situation occurred on our departure. A small guard was intended to be left for the protection of the stores; but he objected, remarking, that it ought to be a strong one, or none; for if the responsibility was once taken out of his hands, the natives, stimulated by the hopes of plunder, might not respect the guard; while, if left in his care, the chiefs themselves became responsible for its security;—such is the curious method of internal government used in the wilds of Java, to secure the honesty of both chiefs and their subjects.

We commenced our march at sun-set. The cavalcade of prisoners consisted of about fifty officers, several having gone off the preceding day, two hundred European soldiers, and three hundred well-disciplined black troops, guarded by our red coats, who, having contrived to sit their horses rather better than heretofore, formed a novel kind of corps, often mentioned in jest, though never, I believe, before exhibited, namely, *horse-marines*. The formidable appearance of the procession gave the natives, no doubt, a high idea of English power and valour: we made only one halt as before, and re-entered Cheribon, after having been nineteen hours on the road, with all due *eclat*.

Soudaya Roads, Sourabaya, September.

Intercepted letters from General Janssen having been brought to Cheribon, stating his determination to make another stand at Samarang, for the sovereignty of the island, and Prince *Prang Wedona*, of Madura, holding military rank in the French service, having already joined him with two thousand well-disciplined troops, at the same time that the levies of the Sultan of Mataram were daily expected, Sir Samuel Auchmuty, after looking into Cheribon roads, in the *Modeste* frigate, bent his way towards that place; while the *Hesper* sloop was stationed off Point Indermaya, to countermand the transports to that anchorage, instead of their former destination at Sourabaya, on the shore of the Strait of Madura, where it had been supposed the

French general would make his final stand. Dispatches were likewise forwarded to the native powers, announcing the fall of Cornelis, and pointing out the advantages to be derived from a connection with England.

We quitted Cheribon on the 11th of September, and anchored in the Road of Samarang, lying on the north coast of Java. This town is large, inhabited by many whites, half-casts, Chinese, and natives, and ornamented by good houses and public buildings, which present a neat exterior. The situation is low, but not insalubrious: it is environed by a morass. The river falls into the bay, a short distance below the town, and, though extending several miles into the country, is choked at the mouth by a bar. The bay, like all others on this coast, is shallow, so that large ships are compelled to anchor between four and five miles from the shore.

In addition to the native produce, Samarang enjoyed great wealth from the trade carried on with Borneo, Celebes, and the vast archipelago around these islands, as well as with China. From the former it imported gold-dust, ivory, tin, gums, and innumerable other articles, producing a large profit, in return for which, enormous prices were exacted for every thing European; and China furnished a market for areca, tobacco, and the famous edible bird's-nest, bearing an extravagant value, and in great request with the voluptuaries of that country. It is formed of a gelatinous froth, or weed, skimmed from the surface of the sea, by a species of swallow, (*hirundo esculenta*,) which builds its nest in caverns, and on the perpendicular surface of rocks. Here it indurates; and, at the proper season, men are let down by means of ropes, to deprive, at the risk of their necks, the bird of its habitation: the whitest are esteemed the best. Though most common on the coast, I never till lately understood that they were likewise found many miles in the interior. They are made into a soup, insipid to the taste, but said to be rich, and considered by that sensual people as stimulating to the worship of the Paphian Goddess.

Admiral Stopford and Sir Samuel Auchmuty arrived at Samarang with the principal part of the squadron; but, owing to the original orders given to the transports, few troops had then reached this destination.

Several gun-boats, lying at the mouth of the river, were attacked by the boats of the squadron, and speedily carried; these had been principally used by the Dutch as a kind of guarda costas against the pirate prows filled with Malays, which infested the coasts of the islands in this sea.

On the 18th we anchored in Soudaya Roads, having accompanied the admiral and part of the fleet, with the captured

gun-boats, from Samarang, in order to commence operations against Sourabaya, the principal town in this, the eastern extremity of Java. The general, in the mean time, remained at the former place, waiting for reinforcements to dislodge the governor, whose cause was now evidently desperate. He still, however, held out.

The channel, or strait, of Madura, sometimes called Manara, dividing the island of the former name from Java, is from three to six or seven miles broad. By the eastern outlet, large vessels have not sufficient depth of water to go through: here likewise it is narrowest, and here Sourabaya is built. We entered therefore by the western mouth, and anchored about four miles within it, being unable to proceed farther, on account of Fort Lodowic, a strong work, completely sweeping the channel. Near to this, and above it, is the little islet of Manara, projecting into the strait from the Java shore; and farther up lies the town of Gressee, or Gressec, off which the enemy's men-of-war and large merchant-ships commonly anchored; still farther up, about six miles, is Sourabaya. The latter is, therefore, unassailable by sea; and between it and Fort Lodowic, the strait, in fact, becomes a capacious and secure harbour, inaccessible to hostile shipping, and forming a noble resort for their own, the depth of water being six or seven fathoms. Below the fort, and down as far as where our fleet lay, the channel is narrow, winding, and somewhat shallow, being little more than three fathoms deep; but as the mud is of a peculiarly light and loose description, vessels of a greater draught than this offer the curious spectacle of sailing through it without interruption, leaving their track marked out by the discoloration of the water.

At day-light on the morning of the 19th, the troops, consisting of the marines of the fleet, a detachment of artillery, and a battalion of sepoy, debarked at Soudaya, this being the nearest point to the object of attack. A fine road runs hence to Gressec, about twelve miles distant, crossed by two or three considerable rivers, one of which, the Sooloo, has its origin more than eighty miles in the interior. The enemy, it appeared, had already abandoned that town, which, though once important and pretty, has latterly fallen to decay. The situation is low, and said to be unhealthy, and the ground swampy. A considerable trade is driven here in salt obtained from pans in the vicinity; and, though the population is diminished, it still contains a resident and several white families, who behaved with attention to our troops. These, soon uniting with a force of Madurese, already organised against Sourabaya by Captain Harris, of his majesty's ship *Drake*, pushed on for that town, which surrendered without resistance, the enemy, amounting to about 500 men, laying down their arms.

Sourabaya may be considered the eastern capital of Java, as Batavia is the western; for though only of modern date, it is rapidly rising into consequence. The distance between these two places somewhat exceeds 500 miles. The new city, however, though much less extensive and populous, is more handsome, healthy, and pleasant, than the old: it is, besides, situated on a fine river, and has likewise the very superior advantage of a harbour, which may be rendered the best either in this or in any of the neighbouring islands. Général Daendels saw the importance of the situation; and as the bay of Batavia had always been liable to insult, he intended this for a secure naval rendezvous. Though not the founder, he may therefore be considered the father of the town: public buildings were erected under his care, an arsenal formed, and vessels constructed, which, though not very large or numerous, served at least as the promise of greater things hereafter.

The European town lies on the right bank of the river; the Chinese and native Campongs on the left; they are united by bridges, up to which coasters with merchandize may ascend. The former contains the fort, barracks, and government offices; the streets are broad and shaded with trees in the national taste; the houses are commodious and generally fine, and the people respectable; and commonly opulent.

Beautiful as the environs of the western capital are, we have them successfully imitated, nay almost excelled here. While the fresh and lively scenery of gardens, avenues, groves, and villas, continually meets the eye, the fertilizing operations of agriculture and commerce going on in the rice-fields and on the river, the intermixture of native and Chinese habitations, the topes of cocoa-nut trees, the villages, populous and governed by their own chiefs, who are responsible for their orderly demeanor, render the neighbourhood as highly attractive to the mere admirer of natural beauty, as to the practical politician who makes the substantial means, not the ornaments of a country, his study. The district is fruitful, and abundantly supplies the inhabitants. But the adjoining principality of Panoorookan is represented to possess a thin population, several tracts of deserts, and woods tenanted only by the elephant, buffaloe, tiger, and rhinoceros.

Fort Lodovic, which commands the avenue to the harbour, was at first intended to be assaulted by the frigates led by the *Nisus*; but this idea was abandoned on discovering the difficulty of access to it, added to its strength. On the 19th it was summoned by Admiral Stopford to surrender, but without effect. Next morning, Captain Beaver, who had been employed on this mission, but, from being blindfolded, had not an opportunity of examining the fort, proceeded to reconnoitre it, prepara-

tory to the erection of works, and, after considerable difficulty, gained a good position for this purpose on Manara Island, about long musket-shot distant. The fort is insular, being built on piles and rocks, sunk in several fathoms water: the execution is truly wonderful, and is another monument of the talents and perseverance of Daendels. Previously to its erection, the navigation to Sourabaya offered no interruption to a hostile force; and Sir Edward Pellew, in consequence, taking out many of the guns of his flag-ship, the *Culloden*, 74, proceeded up to the harbour in 1806, and cut out the Dutch shipping. This work, commenced immediately afterwards, was finished in 1809. The labour and expence proved immense. The natives, however, were compelled to work upon this as upon other public structures, by requisition; and, according to a story in circulation, a chief, having committed some real or imaginary crime, was stripped of his territories, which, being sold to a few Chinese, replenished the vacant coffers of the treasury for the occasion.

During the reconnoitering excursion, Captain Beaver, accompanied by another officer of the ship, had an opportunity of seeing one of those extraordinary monsters which nearly shock credibility, and in many instances render absolute facts almost suspicious. To approach the best ground for their purpose, it became necessary to embark in a canoe along with a Dutch guide and several natives; and in rowing round part of Manara islet, they discovered this monster,—an alligator of enormous size, basking on a mud-bank. The guide, as well as the natives, knew it immediately. The officers for several minutes could not be persuaded that it was any thing which had ever been endowed with the vital principle: incredulity was their first emotion, and astonishment would be but a faint name for the second. At the lowest computation it was forty feet in length. The circumference of the thickest part of the body seemed nearly that of a bullock, and this continued for about double the length of the same animal; the extent of the jaws was calculated to be at least eight feet; the eyes glistened like two large emeralds, but with a lustre that nothing inanimate could express: the hinder part lay slightly curved. The figure altogether might have been easily mistaken for a tree half-enveloped in mud, that had fallen from the bank, and the locking of the scales toward the tail, for small branches not closely lopped.

The rowers, after their first cry of surprise, had involuntarily paused, while the officers minutely examined the huge creature with glasses. It lay extended close to the water, but at a sufficient distance from the canoe not to be dreaded. They gazed on it with wonder as intense as it was unfeigned; the sun was

exceedingly hot, and the animal not having once stirred, they concluded it to be asleep. The guide, however, contradicted this impression; and, to prove that he was correct, a native fearlessly jumped on the bank, when they had the satisfaction of seeing the monster, which had been evidently on the watch, plunge into the water, there seven fathoms deep, and, by the agitation of the element, which resembled that produced by the launch of a small vessel, traced it to a considerable distance.

While waiting the arrival of mortars to commence operations against the fort, intelligence of the occupation of Sourabaya, and the surrender of the whole island, were received. A successful attack, it appeared, had been made on the enemy's position at Samarang: their troops failed in the requisite steadiness, and, yielding to necessity, General Janssèn submitted.

Soon after the news of this capitulation, his majesty's ship *Bucephalus* returned from the pursuit of the two French frigates which escaped from Gressec Roads, having had an indecisive engagement with them off Borneo. Immediately on this intelligence, the *Nisus* and *President* were ordered to prepare for sea.—Soon afterwards we quitted Soudaya Roads; and, on the 28th, passed through the Straits of Sunda, bidding adieu, with some degree of regret, to the picturesque shores of Sumatra on the right-hand, and of Bantam on the left, not forgetting "Thwart-the-way Island," situated between.

At Sea, December.

(We returned to the Isle of France, and, having made some stay there, proceeded to cruize off the islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam, in the Southern Indian Ocean, it having been understood at Batavia that vessels with supplies for the island were daily expected from France, and these islands lying in their route.

We descried St. Paul, sometimes called Amsterdam, in the evening: the weather was moderate, the sun near the horizon, and, being on the western side, we saw its abrupt and iron-bound shores to advantage, tipt by the mellow beams of the declining planet. It is on the eastern side, however, that ships sometimes anchor in fine weather. This we could not approach for several days, from the violence of the elements, but at last gained a good view of this singular spot. At a distance it appears a solid, conical mountain, rising abruptly from the midst of an immense ocean: on a nearer approach, the higher part seems scooped out into a vast basin, with the side nearest the sea broken down to the water's edge, affording a view of the interior, and admitting the ocean through a narrow portal over a bridge of rocks. The bottom of this amazing cavity forms a fine pond of water, filled with fish, and free from the turbulence of the

ocean continually thundering near the entrance. It is evidently the crater of an extinct volcano. Somewhat elliptical in form, the sides rise with regularity to the summit, or mouth, which in circumference is said to be $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, that of the basin or pond being $1\frac{1}{2}$. From the edge of the crater to the surface of the water, the height exceeds 700 feet; and the depth of water being 30 fathoms, the entire height does not fall short of 900 feet. The mouth of the crater is the highest part of the island, which gradually descends to the northward, but the shores are high and rugged.

St. Paul was, as well as Amsterdam, discovered and named by the Dutch navigator Flaming, in 1697. It is about five miles long, and three broad, and lies in $38^{\circ} 42'$ S. lat., $77^{\circ} 53'$ E. long. It is so perfectly insular, and unconnected with habitable lands, that were we to adopt the idea of all islands having originally formed parts of continents, it would be difficult to tell to which it belonged. The crater is a considerable curiosity: how long it has been silent cannot be conjectured, but probably many centuries, and it is doubtless of submarine origin. A series of changes are going on, which mark the general disorganization taking place in every part of the earth. Flaming speaks of the basin, at present so extensive, as of little importance. "Near the right road," he observes, "is a salt-water pond, whereto the seals go over the rock that separates it from the sea about twenty paces. This pond is shaped like a half-moon, and about a pistol-shot long." Perhaps we have not a more remarkable instance of the united effects of air, heat, and moisture, in decomposing the hardest substances, than this of obliterating twenty paces of rock, and enlarging the basin to its present size, in little more than a century: in another, it may render the pond accessible to ships. The rocks are considerably below the surface of the water, even at low-tide, and the entrance is about forty yards wide: at a little distance on the right, is a remarkable sugar-loaf rock.

Near the edge of the basin, the ground is generally level, and covered with verdure, which, at a greater distance, becomes a long coarse grass, extending up the sides of the crater. The ascent to the summit of the island would seem to be a work of some difficulty: the path lies to the right; and on the hill a flag-staff had been erected by late visitors. The face of the island, which can only be seen from the sea, or by ascending this hill, has a parched, dirty, brown appearance, without trees or shrubs. The soil we did not examine, not having ascended the hill, but it would seem to be only a slight covering to the rock: near the basin, culinary vegetables might probably flourish, were they protected from the vast numbers of seals which go on-shore to

bask in the grass; no traces of gardening, however, were discovered. The ground is covered with a variety of loose stones of volcanic origin, and Captain Beaver pointed out several heaps, which, viewed from the ship, had the appearance of tumuli. Several hot-springs are found near the basin, so that it is no exaggeration to say, that fish may be thrown from the latter into the former, and boiled for use, without being removed off the hook. A few wild hogs have been discovered, introduced at a remote period, by former visitors. Man has not made this island his fixed residence, the author of the universe never having given existence to his creatures where there were not adequate means of support. The fertile and well-peopled spots in the Pacific Ocean, form marked contrasts to the dreary nakedness and solitary misery of Kerguelen's Land, Prince Edward's Island, Tristan d'Acunha, Georgia, Falkland's Islands, and others in the southern hemisphere. To the northward nature seems to have been more bountiful: Orkney, Shetland, the Faro islands, and Iceland, all in high latitudes, possess a numerous population, and supply the principal wants of civilized life.

Vessels employed on what is called a skinning voyage, frequently leave part of their crews here, and at other islands to the southward, to kill seals, returning at intervals for the product of their labours. The winter is the better season for this employment, but the island is almost too inhospitable for this or any other purpose: still many run the risk, amid colds, incessant rain, storms, short days, and every species of personal privation that human nature can suffer. Whalers sometimes frequent the island, and make excursions to the southward with great success: the fish seem numerous in the vicinity. Vessels bound to China, Java, New-Holland, and other parts of the east, endeavour to descry it, to ascertain the correctness of their reckoning.

Seals are not so numerous here as they were, vast numbers being annually killed to supply the European and Indian markets. Several hundreds were playing in the basin, or frisking on-shore, when our boat appeared: those in the water eagerly followed it, sometimes floating on the surface, or standing erect, the better to gratify their curiosity. When the men landed, however, a violent agitation was perceived among the shore party, accompanied by a noise like the low murmuring of dogs: they all ran towards the water, with a pace not by any means quick, and usually go straight forward, without regarding obstacles. The seal is well known as one of the amphibia frequenting the shores of rocky islands in high latitudes, and is well defended from the cold by a thick coat of fur. The body

is round, commonly from twenty inches to two feet in circumference, and three or four feet in length: the snout projects considerably, having bristles on each side the mouth: the legs are short. In self-defence, a sharp wound is inflicted by its teeth; this is, however, easily avoided, and the animal killed, by a smart blow across the snout, the usual method employed by sealers. Sea-lions, I am informed by those who have been in the trade, are nothing more than a larger species of seal, furnished with two large tusks. The various names of sea-dogs, sea-wolves, sea-calves, &c., are bestowed on them from fancied resemblances.

The seal seems not only much attached to its young, but active in their defence: one of our men, who had killed several, attempted to secure a young one alive, and actually had it in his arms, when the dam contrived to throw him down, and liberate the captive. It is, in general, too fat to form an agreeable food; but, as sailors turn every thing to the best advantage, they contrived, not without difficulty, to separate the fat from the lean. I had the curiosity to taste the latter: the fry was good, somewhat resembling that of the sheep; and the ribs, when broiled, though strong, made a tolerable substitute for mutton-chops. The skin is used for a variety of purposes, and, as well as the fur and oil, sells to advantage: by the seamen it is made into caps, waistcoats, and other articles of clothing.

Fish abound here in such quantities, that nature seems to have compensated to the sea for her niggardliness to the land; for, standing in one evening toward the anchorage, we dispatched three boats, with about thirty lines, near to the entrance of the basin; in two or three hours they returned, with about 600 fish, averaging three or four pounds weight each. Their voracity was truly singular, many having been caught on the bare hook, while others greedily swallowed the accidental doublings of the line: the men actually dreaded dipping their hands overboard, lest they should be mistaken for bait, so numerous were this hungry tribe near the surface of the water.

Great numbers of aquatic birds, particularly the albatross, peterel, penguin, and a variety of others found in the higher latitudes, resort to St. Paul. The peterel tribe, familiarly known by the name of Mother Carey's Chickens, exceeds the European in size. The albatross is seldom seen, except in the latitudes of the Cape, or at least considerably south of the equator, when numbers always follow the ship for the fragments thrown overboard, and are easily taken with a hook and line. They are the largest of all the aquatic class, sometimes being twice the size of a turkey, and may, for their strength as well as magnitude, be termed the eagles of the ocean. The wings of the

largest measured, from tip to tip, eleven feet eight or nine inches: even thirteen feet, I am told, are not uncommon, but ten appear to be the general size. This bird is remarkable for having an additional joint in the wing, a peculiarity I did not at first observe.

Amsterdam is about fifty miles distant from St. Paul, and very discernible from the latter in clear weather. It is equally naked and barren: the land seems higher, the aspect inhospitable, the black and rocky shores, momentarily whitened by a furious surf, rarely allow the approach of a boat, and a rugged peak seems to rise perpendicularly from the water, about 1000 feet in height. We did not attempt to land here, for there was not the least inducement, nor did it indeed seem at all practicable, had we been so inclined.

From these islands we proceeded to the Cape of Good Hope, and here I have to close my narrative, but with this observation, that we passed over the supposed site of a shoal laid down in some of the charts as existing off the promontory of the Cape, without meeting with interruption, or seeing any thing that could be mistaken for such. Where dangers of this description are doubtful, Captain Beaver usually proceeds straight for the latitude and longitude in which they are represented to be; and, such is the inaccuracy of the older voyagers in the reckoning, that, strange as it may seem, the surest way of avoiding danger is to steer directly for it.

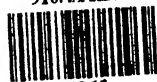
Directions to the Binder.

	Page.
The Chart to face the Title-page.	6
View of the Cape	24
Plan of the North-west Coast of the Isle of France	28
Plan of the Landing of the British Army in Mapou Bay, Isle of France	





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